Pied Piper

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/18820600.

Rating:
Teen And Up Audiences

Archive Warning:
No Archive Warnings Apply

Category:
Gen

Fandom:
僕のヒーローアカデミア | Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia

Relationship:
Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead/Shirakumo Oboro/Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Tamakawa Sansa/Tsukauchi Naomasa

Character:
Midoriya Izuku, Midoriya Inko, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Shigaraki Tomura | Shimura Tenko, Tsukauchi Naomasa, Tamakawa Sansa, Giran (My Hero Academia), Bakugou Katsuki, Shinsou Hitoshi, OC - Character, Kurogiri (My Hero Academia), Eri (My Hero Academia), Chisaki Kai | Overhaul, Shuuzenji Chiyo | Recovery Girl, Shirakumo Oboro, Akaguro Chizome | Stain

Additional Tags:
Vigilante Midoriya Izuku, Quirkless Midoriya Izuku, Midoriya Izuku Does Not Have One for All Quirk, Vigilantism, General Education Department Midoriya Izuku, BAMF Midoriya Izuku, Some angst, Sassy Midoriya Izuku, Midoriya Izuku Swears, mentions of bullying, Mentions of Suicide, martial arts midoriya izuku, there are ocs but they're not main characters, social media aspects, i hurt our sunshine boy im sorry i promise i love him, if i give midoriya ofa you have permission to physically fight me outside of denny's at 3 am, mineta is now in jail you're welcome, Dadmic, actually it's angsty city im sorry i did not plan for this it just happened, Minor Character Death, Dadzawa, bro fuck death arms all my homies hate death arms, Dadboro, qpr, Kurogiri is Not Shirakumo Oboro, canon is dead but Oboro Shirakumo is not, Happy Ending

Language:
English

Collections:
The Bard's Roost, Silver and Gold, Bnha fics that keep me from sleeping, The Last Rec List, The Timelesses, Long Fics to Binge, Ashes' Library, Katya’s Korner Fic Recs, Genius bnha fanfics, Fics that I will reread, Typsy's Dragon Hoard, You haven’t lived if you haven’t read this, Quirkless Midoriya Izuku, Storycatchers' pile of heroic hero stuff, Bnha Bookclub Discord Recs, These are the best written fanfics I've ever read, Read it and weep, ùwú oh worm? then squirm., Got 99 problems but these ain't one, Cloudy with a Chance of great fics, Fave Fics Found, Vigilante Izuku because why the hell not, The Unitary, Stories That Deserve More, Bnha fics that carved out a place in my brain, 1Very_very_good_storys1, viri's hermit hole of good shit, The Library, I suffer from this condition called having good taste, Gifts from Literature Deities, bnha fics i dream about 🌙, bnha fics that are very very close to killing me, Best of Dodo’s Hero Academia, No_ofa_roundhurrr, call 911 for I have died at the sheer perfection that are these fics, BNHA Treasure Box, nonsense station's discord recs!, Scratch's pile of fanfics that they recommend to every stranger like the gospel, Bnha titles that were definitely worth my sleepless nights, ☆My Hero Stories Worth Your Time☆, 📚 Fanfic Forum Discord Recs, 🍀GOAT FICS feat: My Hero Izuku 🍀, Fanfics I’d eat again at 3 am and already have, I’ve given my heart and soul for this fic, Shady BNHA Faves (Including Crossovers), 💔My Hero Stories That Made Me Cry💔, Purple Archivist: Read and Read Again, great reads, The Best of BNHA Fics for Picky Readers, soul healing comes from fanfiction, Creative Chaos Discord Recs, Faves and must-reads, my skin is clear my crops are flourishing my grades are up and its because of these fics, FreakingAmazingFavorites, HighQualityBNHAFics, ☆ Little Red's BNHA Library ☆, shitting and crying but in a good way, fics to sink your teeth into, Days' best bnha finds 🌥, MyHero: Quirkless Hero, MyHero: Vigilant Deku, snibeids currently reading, BNHA Fics *chef’s kiss* 💯💯💯, BaNHAmmer, Wolfis MyHeroAcademia Library, Prapika's absolute favorites, Many Condensed to One, Simmering soup, Worth It BNHA Fanfics Reading List - Ongoing, ✧Chris’s Best Izuku Fics✧, fuckin' mint, Izuku being a fucking badass, mha fanfic that waters my crops, Still_to_read, Fics recommended by lunakaiii on tik tok, traumastudents, Writeass's favorite fics, bnha, Bnha, i have a crippling fanfiction obsession, Мангаипрочее, Bug's Fav MHA Fics, Izuku's Dads, Izuku Angst (aka Give Izuku a Hug Challenge), Izuku Midoriya Related Fics, From the

Vault, MHA_fanfics_because_idk, International Fanworks Day 2022 - Classic Fic Recs, Genmhasmfffffff, .⋆˚.•*.↩My Bebu multiverse♡♡↬.*•.˚⋆., my heart is here, Tiktok_recommended, Sad but great stories i suppose, Where Green Beans Grow, BNHA_Fics_to_Read_Later, .☄Thoth's Luxury Library☄., grey_cosplay's tiktok MHA fic recs, Elite_Izuku_Centric_Fic_Recs, Characters Explores Social Media, A Pleasure To Read, My Favourite Bnha stories to read, My Favourites to read, vespertine, Nicee, my hero academia: a medley, Stalker's Amongst Stalker's, Adore Able's Server MHA Vigilante!Izuku Collection, my tab dump, The Eternal Crack Server Fic Rec Collection, Линчеватель Изуку, BNHA_FICS, (mostly) just some funky lil Izu fics, Vigilante!AU, The Cream of the Crop, Eatbook's Cherished and wanting more All Fandoms, The best fics, ✧Wan Shi Tong's Library✧, FreakingAmazingFics, Hand-picked by a picky-person, WOO Insomnia Time, Our Hero Academia!, Discord Fics From Network Error, Good and Intriguing AUs, I need a good parental figure [read: Dadzawa] in my life, A Dragon's Hoard of Amazing Fics, Favorite WIPs, Jaded Discord Server Recommendations, Traumatizing class 1-A and by extension Aizawa, ✨ Unfinished Fics to Keep Track Of ✨, food for the soul, Top Tier Reads To Munch On, I am in absolute ✧AWE✧ ajfkshfkd, BNHAHappyFunFics, These fics made me scream, I'm in love with these fics, ✧Vigilante Collection✧, can you guess my name?(hint its NOT deku), Nohn's Favorites, Things to fuel my escapism., Esperando a que terminen-, gray's favs !!, Testing The Limits of my Emotions, mha fics that made me exorcise myself, Worth It BNHA Fanfics Reading List - Completed, Vigilante Izuku, CKFTR, Discord Recs from The Rabbit Appreciation Server, ForRiamostly, FanFiction Hangover[This deserve to be worshiped and I'll rec these for the rest of my life!), Mha fics That are Geva approved & recommended, Bnha fics I don't want to loose, ♥ All-Time Favorites ♥, Fics to hyperfixate on

Stats:

Published: 2019-05-14 Completed: 2023-05-14 Words: 297,012 Chapters: 69/69

Pied Piper

by Blackholeca

Summary

If they wouldn't give him a chance then the solution seemed simple, he'd give himself one. He'd force the world to see him, force them to recognize his hard work. He wasn't missing a quirk, it was simply that everyone else had been given an advantage. He wasn't broken, or useless, or incapable, and he'd prove it by outrunning all of them, he who was quirkless, he who had started in last.

[UA rejects Midoriya from the hero course and he finds salvation in vigilantism.]

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Black Hole

Chapter Notes

TW://

brief mentions of suicide and bullying

_____

Please do not repost this work; this unfortunately includes translations [while I don't feel I need to offer an explanation for this it is because I would prefer to have direct access to all publicly posted copies of Piper though I do appreciate all the translation offers I've received over the years 💕]

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Midoriya Izuku is the boy with a stippling of stars across his cheeks and a sun for a heart that desires only to help others. And despite his quirkless status, despite the bullying, despite everyone telling him that he'll never be a hero, that desire has never wavered.

But, he's a smart kid, he knows that one cannot simply become a hero through dreams alone. He's quirkless, but that doesn't mean he's *incapable* . It simply means that he has to try that much harder, that his start line has been set further back than the rest of his peers.

So, at nine he begs his mother to enroll him at a small dojo, it's a thirty minute walk from their apartment, and only thirteen minutes from his current school. Inko never mentions how she'll manage the extra bill, but he notices that she's started coming home later on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

And Izuku feels bad that he's making her work even harder than she already is. But, he needs this. He *needs* to be a hero.

His new martial arts instructor is a Korean woman with blue, luminescent freckles, and blacked out sclera. She gives off a sort of ethereal energy, but her regal posture and the slight squint to her eyes help dissipate such illusions.

"My name is Ji-woo Chee, in this dojo you are to refer to me as Chee Sensei." Midoriya's own posture straightens as she turns to face the six

of them. “You’re here to learn the art of Muay Thai. It is not a game, nor is it a hobby, it is a martial art, a lifestyle, and I demand that you treat it as such.” Her eyes are somewhat unnerving, the fact that he’s unable to tell if she’s looking at him or not putting the boy on edge. “If you are unable to understand or accept this then this is not the right dojo for you. You came here to learn, but I will only be able to teach you if you are willing to be taught,” she pauses, looking over the group. “There’s only one major thing that I ask of you here, and that is your promise that you’ll only use what you learn here to protect. If I discover that you’re using your skills to bully or intimidate others I *will* ban you from this dojo and you will not be allowed to return. Am I clear?”

There’s a chorus of student voices, “Yes, Chee Sensei!”

Her stance shifts. “Now, arms up!”

“Hai!”

“Midoriya! Elbows up! You want to leave your midriff exposed in order to lure your opponent’s attacks there. Trick them into thinking it’s a weak point in your defense.”

“Hai!” They’ve been doing drills for the last thirty minutes so the word comes out breathy as he brings his arms up further before throwing another punch.

“Tanaka! Feet together! Your stance is too wide and your hips aren’t squared. This isn’t boxing.”

“Hai!”

“Hirano! Keep your feet moving! Make sure you’re shifting your weight from foot to foot, the march is the most basic skill you’ll need for Muay Thai.”

“Midoriya! What’d I just say! Keep your fists in front of your face, pay attention to what you’re doing.”

The boy’s cheeks flush before he stutters out a ‘yes, Chee Sensei’. He’s tired, and the fact that his arms keep drifting down makes him embarrassed, but he’s happy. The sun in his chest makes him almost radiant, the light leaking out in the form of an uncontrollable smile that’s nudging the corners of his mouth upwards.

I can be a hero.

It isn't until a year after Midoriya had started at the dojo that they see Ji-Woo follow up on her initial promise, the events surrounding it serving as a reminder for the remaining five.

Hirano is the first to bring up the missing student, asking the question that everyone else had wanted to know the answer to. "Chee Sensei? Tanaka hasn't been here in awhile, is he sick?" The others all pause in their stretches, gazes finding their instructor's.

Izuku never had disliked the older boy, but there'd always been something a little too vicious that would come out of him while sparring that made Midoriya wary.

Chee Sensei takes a moment to respond, her pitch stained eyes watching them, putting the class on edge. "I learned from his mother last week that he attacked one of his classmates at school. He couldn't follow the dojo's rules therefore he will not be returning to us."

Murmurs go through the small group, Hirano leaning over to whisper something in the ear of the girl next to her.

"Let this serve as a reminder for all of you. The rules you agreed upon at the beginning of your training here will not be made a mockery of."

"There's only one major thing that I ask of you here, and that is your promise that you'll only use what you learn here to protect," the voice ringing in his head is Chee Sensei's. The memory surrounding it feels years away, but the words themselves echo like Izuku had only heard them yesterday.

"I will not let anyone smear this dojo's reputation because of something so impulsive." Her expression is carefully blank, but woman's luminescent freckles flare, the change unnoticed by all but Midoriya.

She's angry, he observes.

"Your actions reflect back on not only yourself, but on everything that you're affiliated with. Your friends, your family, your school, your dojo, they are all affected by what you do. Remember this the next time you feel the urge to make a fool of yourself. Now back to stretching."

There's a rumble of "yes, Chee Sensei" from the remaining five students as they resume warming up.

Midoriya's gaze follows the woman across the room as he sits down. Her black ponytail swings behind her as she makes her way towards the window where she watches the sun set over Musutafu's skyline.

"...Use what you learn here to protect."

Izuku lets out a slow breath as he bends, hands wrapping around the base of his left foot.

"Protect."

I will, Midoriya thinks, eyes closing, *I'll protect everyone with the power I'll earn.*

The next year passes peacefully for the five remaining in their class. All of them holding Tanaka as a strong reminder to think before they act, and for Midoriya it serves as the extra push he'd needed to work even harder.

It's during this year that Chee Sensei first brings up the idea of competitions. Class is over, and they'd just been released from practice. "Before you leave, there's a local muay thai competition coming up next month. If there's anyone that's interested in possibly competing then please come talk to me before you head out. If I think you're ready for it then we can talk to your parents."

It takes only a moment before there's a mad dash to line up in front of the woman. Ji-woo chuckling at their excitement.

From her own place in line Hirano spies Izuku heading for his backpack. She bounces on her heels twice, glancing between him and Chee Sensei before abandoning the other three to go talk to the boy. "Midoriya?" He looks up as she approaches. "Are you not going to ask Sensei about the competition?"

Izuku blinks at her in mild surprise. "No, I'm not really interested."

"Don't you think it'd be fun?" She leans forward, balancing on her toes as she waits for his response.

"I'm not here to have fun though."

Hirano's cheeks puff out as Midoriya turns back to his bag, undoing the wraps around his hands and wrists. "You don't have to take everything so seriously all the time you know." The boy flexes his fingers, knuckles a bit sore from today's training. "You're younger than me so you shouldn't worry about everything so much!" She decides to ruffle his hair before turning back to the line in front of Chee Sensei.

"I'm not worrying about anything," he murmurs just out of earshot, "It's just that I have to work twice as hard as everyone else to get where I'm going." He shoves his hand wraps into his backpack before throwing it over his shoulder and heading towards the door.

Ji-woo eyes him as he goes. She'd been expecting the boy to be the first of the five to come and talk to her about the competition. But, it figures that he'd have an aversion to such types of pointless fighting. *He's a diligent kid, a good fighter.*

"Chee Sensei?"

Not one for needless violence.

Ji-woo makes a noncommittal noise, turning back to look at the student in front of her. She plays off her silence as thoughtful contemplation. "Your reaction times are still rather slow Gamon. I don't think you'd be ready for the competition in time." She watches the boy's face fall. "But, if you improve enough before then I'll reconsider, so work hard."

"Hai!"

"Midoriya, I'd like to talk to you for a moment before you leave."

It's his third year at the dojo, and this certainly isn't the first time Chee Sensei had wanted to talk to him after class. But, usually it's either trying to convince him to enter a competition or to inquire after the burns and bruises he'd earned after a one sided skirmish with Bakugou. But, it's been awhile since Katsuki had picked a fight with him, and there weren't any upcoming tournaments that he knows of. Izuku looks away from his sparring partner, giving Hirano the opening she needs to send a quick kick to his ribs while his guard is down. He stumbles at the unexpected attack, eyes zipping back to see the smug smirk on his partner's lips as she throws a fist towards his face. It gives him just enough time to redirect the punch away from him.

He can hear Chee Sensei laughing behind him, a reaction few of her students are privy to. “You shouldn’t let your guard down while you’re fighting. You can’t let something as simple as words distract you.”

Izuku feels fire in his cheeks as he catches Hirano’s arm when she goes in for another jab, using her own momentum to bring her down to the mat. “Yes, Sensei.”

He’s pulling off his gloves when the woman finally comes over to talk with him. “Midoriya, I was wondering if you’d be interested in trying something new.”

He turns quickly, fatigue forgotten and eyes sparking with new life. “Yes.”

The woman lets out a quiet laugh. “So quick.” The corners of her eyes crinkle. “You don’t even know what it is yet.”

“Yes.”

“So, you’d be fine if I started training you on how to use weapons?” Ji-Woo swears she sees literal stars in the boy’s eyes when she says this, the light radiating from the smile he’s giving her almost blinding.

“Yes.”

“We’d replace two of your regular lessons with weapons training, and we’d have to meet later than usual on those days.”

“ *Yes* .” Izuku is *vibrating* with excitement, weapons would be essential if he wanted to be a hero.

She lets out a small laugh before patting Midoriya’s shoulder. “Alright then, I’ll talk to your mother about it and set up a new meeting time.”

Midoriya doesn’t know what he’d been expecting when Chee Sensei had talked about weapons training last week, but he’s knows this certainly wasn’t it.

“We’ll start with this.”

When she pulls out a wooden staff, Izuku is more than a little disappointed.

“Jahng bong. Though you’re more likely to hear it called a bo staff.”

It's a stick, he thinks, staring at it with a furrow in his brow.

"I'll teach you the basics before I add you to another class I'm working with, they're all older that you, but I'm sure you'll be able to hold your own."

Izuku's eyes brighten.

"This can be an effective weapon in the right hands." She twirls it in her hand. "I believe you'll be able learn it quickly. You're a smart kid Midoriya."

The twelve year old straightens his posture, squaring his shoulders as Ji-Woo tosses him the staff in her hands before grabbing another one for herself.

"Now, I want you to mirror my stance."

In the end it takes him a month to master the basics, and despite what Chee Sensei had said, she's surprised he's got everything down after only eight sessions. Of course she doesn't know about the training he does at Dagobah everyday, fighting invisible enemies with a metal pipe he'd found among the trash.

"I think you're ready for the other class. There's not much I could teach you here that you wouldn't learn just as easily there." Ji-woo lets out a breathy laugh as she reaches behind her head to tighten her ponytail. Midoriya leans himself against his staff, his breathing only slightly labored. "Most of the students in that class either have work or cram school, so class starts at six on Tuesdays and Thursdays. A bit later than you're use to so make sure you don't fall behind on your school work. "

Ji-woo smirks at the boy as Izuku huffs out a laugh. "Hai~"

Over the next two years as Midoriya continues his sessions with Chee Sensei, they lose another student to the sands of time. Though in this case the choice is a willing one. When Hirano leaves she says it's because she's grown up and grown out out of it, says that she wanted to try something new now that she was starting high school. And Izuku really doesn't get it, doesn't understand how she can spend almost five years training only to act like none of it mattered in the end.

“Hirano never saw muay thai as a lifestyle.” Chee Sensei’s voice startles him. “It was only ever a source of entertainment for her. She never cared about winning competitions either. I’m sure she was only in them for the adrenaline rush.” Ji-woo gives the boy a soft smile as he turns towards her. “You were mumbling again,” is the only explanation she gives as the rest of her tuesday class continues running through a set of drills she’d given them. “Hirano is a smart kid, but she doesn’t take many things seriously, this was just a hobby for her. ”

Midoriya doesn’t believe he could think of muay thai as a hobby even if he wanted to, the idea that it could so easily be categorized as something so inconsequential troubles him. He absentmindedly twirls the bo staff in his hand.

Hirano’s going had been on his mind since she’d left, and now adding what Chee Sensei had said he was sure it would continue to tug at his attention in the days to come.

“Don’t let it bother you too much Midoriya.”

But, it does bother him.

They’d lost Tanaka to power, and now Hirano to boredom.

There had only been two things asked of them, not to harm others, and take the training seriously.

This place, this training, was a stepping stool for him. His race had begun at the age of four, and for the last nine years he’d been struggling just to catch a glimpse of the backs of his peers. But he’d been drawing closer every day since he was nine. With every new training session, whether he be at the dojo sparring with his classmates or battling invisible enemies at Dagobah, he ran faster.

Muay Thai was a lifestyle to him because it had to be. If he didn’t try his hardest, if he didn’t give it his all then… He’d learned over the years that hopes and dreams were as useless as the shooting stars he’d wished upon as a kid. Hard work would be what he used to surpass those running just ahead of him, hard work is what would push him to run faster, to outdistance even more of his peers. His desire would fuel that hard work, in order to protect people, in order to save them. Izuku just had to make sure he didn’t stop running.

But, the race is a hard one. He’d grown up watching Bakugou’s back disappear into the distance, no matter how fast Midoriya would run,

no matter how much he pushed himself to do better. There are times when Bakugou makes it hard to run, other times when he makes it easy. When he's fifteen Katsuki makes it a little bit of both, even from so far ahead the boy still manages to screw up Izuku's race. And, it's during this time that Midoriya nearly breaks one of the dojo's only rules.

"Only use what you learn here to protect."

It's a moment where he very nearly sends a right hook into Bakugou Katsuki's jaw.

"If you want to be a hero that badly, there's a quick way to do it."

Midoriya's fists clench around the straps of his backpack as he makes his way towards the dojo. He hadn't needed to see Bakugou's face to know about the mordant smile on his lips.

"Believe that you'll be born with a quirk in the next life and take a swan dive off the roof!"

"He's telling people to kill themselves now?" Izuku snears, "I'd love to see him bear the consequences of those words." He pauses, his stride stuttering, "No, that would mean…" Midoriya sighs, kicking at a pebble on the sidewalk. He's late today, the fiasco with Katsuki taking longer than he'd liked. So, when he gets to the dojo the others are already stretching and he has to be quick to make his way into the small bathroom to change. He notes the damage done to his jacket and shirt and curses Katsuki in his head. It's hard to see from this angle, but there's also a painfully, bright red spot on his shoulder from Bakugou's quirk that Midoriya's sure will blister given time.

He sighs, pulling on a pair of shorts and slipping a t-shirt over the burn mark before heading out to stretch with the others.

He'd been noticeably more vicious with his punches against the training dummy today. Vicious to the point where Chee Sensei had banned him from sparring for the day, even though she knows he'd never purposely hurt his classmates. Instead she redirects his attention to training his kicks, worried that he'd somehow manage to bruise his knuckles through his kickboxing gloves. But, even then, his kicks had been ruthless and insatiable and she worried about how his legs would hold up against such a beating.

Her students were not immune to bruising, and Midoriya Izuku was certainly no exception. But, there were days when the boy would

come in with bruises too fresh to be from one of his sparring sessions, or show up with burns marks mottling his skin that have no business being there. The boy always has excuses for the injuries when she asks after them, and though she's never fully believed them, she gives him his space and reminds him that she's here to talk if he ever needs to. But, this fury of his today is particularly troubling, it's not a first time occurrence, but it's certainly a rare one.

It's amazing just how much his mood can affect her other students, the number of their mistakes always spiking higher when Midoriya slips into moods like these. All of them wary of his temper and left to question what had managed to cloud the sun in his chest.

"Fear the day when a good heart gives up on you," Ji-woo quotes quietly as she watches the boy. His face is pinched with anger, but it would take a fool not to notice the pain swirling there. "A heart does not turn cold unless it's been treated with coldness for awhile… So, who's been hurting you Midoriya?"

Izuku fights a grimace when Chee Sensei stops him on his way out, resting a heavy hand on his burned shoulder. "You were late today. Any reason why?"

This time the boy really does grimace. "It wasn't anything important."

One of her brows quirk upward. "It was important enough to make you late."

Midoriya tries to look anywhere but her eyes, his inability to determine her line of sight still somewhat unnerving even after being around her for six years. "I just left my notebook somewhere and had to get it."

She continues to eye him skeptically.

"That's why I didn't say anything, because it wasn't important."

The woman lets her eyes drift closed for a moment, letting out a tired sigh as she gently squeezes Izuku's shoulder. She misses the pained twitch of his eye. "I'm not just your instructor Midoriya. I'm also your caretaker while you're here, it's my job to make sure that you're safe and protected and learning what you need to while you're with me. Don't hesitate to talk to me if there's someone or something bothering you."

Izuku is ready for the day to be over, his shoulder aches, and he can feel a dull throbbing in his fists and legs from the training dummy. So when Ji-woo drops her hand from his shoulder he almost sags with relief because he can finally go home and eat the Katsudon his mom said she was making tonight.

But, that isn't the end to his bad day.

He checks their apartment's mailbox on his way to the stairs because as exhausted as he is Izuku knows that the mail is the one thing Inko always forgets to grab when she comes home. A soft smile makes its way across his face when Midoriya opens their box to see several envelopes still there.

He thumbs through it as he walks, pausing in his steps when he sees one addressed to him. It's a letter from UA, one that he hadn't been expecting. Lead pools in his stomach as he stares at it. He turns around, tucking the rest of the mail back into their box as he continues staring at the envelope.

Izuku bites the corner of his lip, brows furrowing before he shoves it into his jacket pocket and jogs away from the building. It takes everything within him not to stop in the middle of the sidewalk and tear open the letter there. The pit of lead in his stomach has only grown larger, heavier, to the point where it's begun to crawl it's way up his throat the more he thinks about what they could want ten months before the exams.

He picks up the pace of his jog.

When his feet finally hit Dagobah's sand he's quick to weave his way into the mounds of old appliances and other discarded trash until he's made his way to his usual small clearing. He rips the letter from his pocket and stares at it in the falling darkness. The street lamps kicks on behind him, its light seeping through the mountain of garbage at his back. Izuku's hands shake with barely restrained nerves as he carefully tears open the envelope and pulls out the letter inside. His eyes strain to read it in the fading light, but his eyes hone in on one particular word 'regret'. Midoriya's knees buckles and he goes down. The sand catching the boy as if it's trying to comfort him.

He strains his eyes harder, gaze jumping back to the top to start from the beginning, hoping, *praying* . But, dreaming never got him anywhere, and evidently neither did his hard work.

They'd sent his application back, saying that "the dangers of hero

work without a quirk are simply too high". They encourage him to apply for a different department. *Not the hero course* .

The thought makes him sick and suddenly the sun that had for so long burned in place of his heart begins imploding. It's slow at first, the complete opposite of the nightmare sequence that's playing rapid fire in his head. But, with every new thought he descends into a darker place until the star between his ribcage collapses into a black hole that's sucking the breath from his lungs. It's changing the effects of gravity, pulling viciously at his organs until he's certain he'll die from it. *He'll die, he'll die, he'll die, he'll die.*

The black hole in his chest is pulling at every quark within his body, latching onto every atom with an inescapable drag of gravity. He watches the letter to see if it will be pulled in as well, but it stays where it is, resting innocently between his hands like it hadn't caused the implosion of his heart.

His fists clench, crinkling the edges of the paper. His vision blurs at the corners as tears drip down his star lined cheeks, several dark splotches appearing on the paper in his hands. His teeth are grit and grind painfully together.

They hadn't even given him a *chance* .

There's an ungodly noise that's forcing its way out of his throat, burning like acid. He lets out a mix between a scream and a sob, a cocktail of pure misery.

They hadn't even given him a *chance* .

Midoriya Izuku is the boy with a stippling of stars across his cheeks and a sun for a heart that desires only to help others. And despite his quirkless status, despite the bullying, despite everyone telling him that he'll never be a hero, that desire has never wavered. Not until now.

Chapter End Notes

> So, this is it. This is where it starts. I've been working on this fic since thanksgiving of last and I'm finally posting it. I had a lot of support getting here! To the absolutely marvelous Avery I thank you for always reading and helping me bounce my ideas off you. You're great motivation and now that I'm finally posting this you don't have to yeet a dumpster at me!
> And to the chaos that is the BDE that you guys for always reading my drafts! You're support and excitement always made my day!

I'll try posting weekly updates! But, I'm a little bitch when it comes to making those kinds of promises so I'll have Avery threaten me with some more flying dumpsters to make sure they get done on time! I've got big plans for this fic so I hope you'll all bear with me in the meantime.
I hope you all enjoyed and I'll see you next week!

Event Horizon

Chapter Notes

TW://

brief mentions of suicide and bullying

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Izuku gets back dinner is already on the table. He's scrubbed the tear tracks from his cheeks before coming in but he hadn't been able to check whether his eyes were red or not. He's sure they are, but there's no hiding it now. Izuku's hands tremble slightly, and he feels like the life had been drained out of him right along with his dreams.

The katsudon Inko made tastes like sand from Dagobah. And, it doesn't take his mother long to notice something's wrong with him when he's picking at his food the way he is.

"Izuku? Did something happen? You came home later than usual."

The boy wants the ground to open up underneath him, wants the black hole in his chest to suck him in, wants it to grind him into atoms like he never existed in the first place. But, his mother stares at him, eyes prompting him to respond.

He contemplates lying to her. He contemplates leaving the letter somewhere she'll find it just so he doesn't have to tell her himself. His shoulder throbs from the burn Bakugou had left with him, and his eyes ache from all his crying. Izuku had been told to kill himself today, he'd been rejected from his dream course at his dream school. He's fifteen and all he wants to do is go lay down and cry some more, maybe not talk for a few days and enjoy the silence it offers him. He just wants to stave off his mother's pitying look.

He feels like throwing up.

"I got a letter from UA. They said I should try applying for another course."

He doesn't tell her that they rejected him. He's not sure he could bring himself to say it if he wanted to.

Izuku sniffles, running his jacket sleeve under his nose, tears blurring

his vision as the boy stares down at the bowl of katsudon in front of him. He can hear the scraping of a chair on the kitchen tile but refuses to look up as he wipes furiously at his eyes.

Inko kneels down on the floor next to him, gently taking his hands between hers. Izuku can feel her fingers trembling around his and turns to look at her. There are tears in her eyes as she stares at him, her face stricken with grief. “I’m so sorry Izuku!”

He flinches at the words. Memories of a four year old Izuku bubbling up with them. The words aren’t ones he wants to hear, not what he *needs* . But, he doesn’t blame her. Not with the face she’s making, not with the tears that are darkening edges of his shorts when she bows her head.

He’s never blamed her, doesn’t think he could if he tried.

His mother is crying for him, for his dreams that the world had crushed so ruthlessly.

How could he blame her for that?

He’d look back on this moment in the future, thankful for her words despite the pain they’d brought with them. It was those words that inspired him to save others, those words that inspired him to prove the rest of the world wrong, those words that kept him running.

But, for now he stays home, doesn’t go to school for the rest of the week, doesn’t even drag himself to the dojo to train. Doesn’t see the point to any of it anymore.

He wakes up to nightmares during these days, even his afternoon naps are plagued by ruthless dreams. It starts with UA’s rejection letter, the nightmare acting as some sort of mordant parody of Harry Potter. Only this time he’s the one hiding the letters and Bakugou’s the one playing the role of Hagrid, storming in their apartment in the dead of night with a sharp smile and a “you’ll never be a hero”.

When his dreams aren’t about the letter he usually finds himself standing at the top of buildings. The first time it happens he’s alone, standing on what looks like his middle school’s roof. He’s watching the sunset when it begins morphing into one of Katsuki’s explosions and the boy comes flying out of the horizon with a grin on his face.

Another nightmare has his mom there crying, telling him how sorry she is. And he doesn’t know how he can tell, but she’s not mourning

for his dreams in this version. They're tears of disappointment, disappointment in him, in herself for giving birth to a quirkless child. In the dream her sobs turn to laughter, *"I knew you weren't good enough. You'll never be good enough."* He finds himself stepping off the edge of the building.

He jerks awake before he can hit the ground, throwing himself out from under his sheets and clutching at his chest as he chokes back a sob.

He knows it's not real, knows that her words had been a result of his stress. But the dream had felt so real, too real for him to look her in the eye.

Midoriya needs to get out. She doesn't mean to, but the sad look his mother keeps giving him every time he comes out of his room is sickening. And now he can't even look at her without remembering the nightmare.

"I knew you weren't good enough. You'll never be good enough."

But, he holds out, trying to reign in the residual fragments of the dream. Inko makes onigiri for lunch and he tries his best to forget.

That afternoon he's pulled from a nap into a new nightmare, one where Izuku finds himself at the top of UA. It's dark, the barest glimmer of starlight bleeding through Tokyo's sky. The boy never turns around, but there's an understanding that something's waiting behind him, something dark, something insatiable. Something that would readily consume him if given the chance.

"You're a useless, quirkless thing," it hisses, *"Not even deserving of the title 'human'."*

His legs begin moving without him, and Midoriya's heart rate spikes as he tries to stop. But fighting against it is like fighting against gravity. His legs pull him to the roof's edge until there's no longer anything solid beneath his feet and the earth begs him closer.

His body obeys.

He tries screaming, but his vocal chords are unresponsive. Above him the stars grow further and he can hear Bakugou's laughter through the wind roaring past his ears.

"A useless, quirkless idiot. A Deku."

Midoriya snaps awake on the couch, throwing himself up and into a seated position.

Most of his nightmares have him waking up with either tears on his cheeks or adrenaline in his veins. Some nights he wakes up with his sheets on the floor or crumpled at the end of his bed and tangled in his feet. Some days it's not so bad, other days it's terrible.

This is one of those other days.

Izuku hunches over himself on the couch, shaking hands clamped between his knees and head bowed over his lap. He squeezes his eyes shut and pinches his mouth closed, trying to purge his mind of the images, and the words, and the sensation of falling.

He remembers the presence behind him and tries to shove it away, tries to lock it in a box with all of his other bad thoughts. But, its voice lingers in his head even after the nightmare has faded, like it's stuck its maw out of the box's lid before Midoriya had managed to fully close it.

"..a useless, quirkless thing.."

The fifteen year old lets out a shaky breath and leans his head against the back of the couch. He stares at the ceiling, tracing the shadows there in attempt to further calm himself. The nightmares leave him restless and tired. The disturbance of his sleep slowly eating at what's left of his sanity after the last few days.

Midoriya can hear Inko in the kitchen, the barest hint of curry spice filling the air of the small apartment. It's usually a comfort, but now it only sets his senses on fire. His dream from last night begins resurfacing, merging with the presence and its disparaging words until the memory of his mother's voice becomes distorted and is replaced. The voice isn't hers anymore, but words still spill from her mouth.

"I knew you were useless."

"A defective creature."

"You're not worthy of the title 'human'."

Izuku wants to scream.

More tears burn at the corners of his eyes as his strength dissolves. *I can't be here.* He pushes himself up on shaking legs and stumbles

towards the door, pulling on his shoes and leaving without a word. He hears a muffled “Izuku?” through the door as he staggers down their apartment’s steps.

Their door opens behind him, Inko’s head peeking out. “Izuku?”

He ignores his mother’s calls, continuing down the stairs before breaking out into a dead sprint as soon as he reaches the ground.

He doesn’t stop running.

Midoriya heads further into the city as street lamps flicker to life around him. The boy shoves through the rush hour traffic like he’s possessed, like he’s being hunted. People send him wary looks as he rushes by, checking behind the boy for pursuers that they’ll never find. There’s only one person who actively tries to stop him, a hero that a distant part of Izuku’s mind registers as Ingenium. The hero manages to snag his arm as he runs by, pulling him to a halt. The boy is winded, but his mind still tries to drag his feet forward.

“Are you alright?”

Midoriya’s eyes are glazed over, his body busy trying to outrun the demons in his head. He heaves his arm from Ingenium’s grasp and continues his race. The hero gives chase, but the fifteen year old is nimble and Tensei can’t use his quirk in crowded areas like these. He quickly loses sight of the boy within the crowd and slows to a halt cursing under his breath.

Izuku keeps running until the voices in his head have been reduced to a mere whisper.

There’s a stitch in his side that he tries to walk off when he finally stops, hands resting on his hips and head thrown back trying to catch his breath.

Above him the sky is pitch.

He’s in a part of town that he doesn’t recognize, the buildings around him worn down, windows slathered in grim and the bricks growing moss at their seams. There’s a corner store across from him whose windows are pasted over with faded advertisements, one that he hopes has a decent bathroom where he can splash some cold water on his face and a cashier he can beg directions from.

The boy gives himself a moment more to catch his breath before

crossing the street. His mind still isn't completely put together yet. The whisper of that toxic voice is still there, but it's quieter now, more manageable.

The cashier is sweeping when he enters, but she still offers him a quiet greeting. There's a father and daughter that he passes on his way towards the bathroom and he gives the little girl a tired smile as he passes. He misses the wide eyed look she gives him.

In the bathroom he splashes water on his face, cooling his flushed cheeks. When he looks in the mirror the fringe of his hair is wet and drips water down his face. He brushes the faux tears away and pokes at the dark circles strung beneath his eyes. His gaze flickers up to his hair again and if the light hits just right he can see just how badly it needs to be washed, he grimaces. He's still in the same set of clothes from this morning, a pair of basketball shorts he usually wears to bed and a pain t-shirt that's soaked with sweat and a splattered with small bit of food from lunch.

"A cockroach draped in human skin."

Izuku flinches at the words before letting his eyes close and taking in a shaky breath, trying to push the voice further into the back of his mind. He lets out a deep sigh before grabbing a paper towel and wiping any remaining water from his face.

When he steps out of the bathroom he feels a bit better, he's cooled down and his breathing has finally evened out. He's just stepping out when the little girl from earlier runs into his legs, clinging to the hem of his shorts. He watches water build in the her eyes and Midoriya blinks at her in shock. He quickly crouches in front of her as she lets go and scrubs at the tears on her cheeks. "He's not my daddy," she whispers.

"Wha-" Izuku's brain grinds to a halt.

"He took me from daddy. I wanna go home." The tears start back up again and he pulls the girl into his chest.

"Who-" he cuts himself off, glancing around the store, "The man you were with?"

She nods against his chest.

"Does your daddy know you're with him?" Izuku peeks around the corner of the short hallway the bathrooms are in, looking for the man

he'd seen earlier. The boy spots the top of his head towards the back of the store.

"No."

Midoriya turns back to look at the girl, a mix of worry swirling in his eyes. "Alright, I- We'll get everything sorted out. Yeah?" Everything is happening too fast, his mind running faster than he can keep up as it tries to determine was to do.

Possible kidnapping situation. I need to contact the police and let them confirm the situation, but my phone is still at home. The police station? He doesn't know if they'd be able to make it across the store without being seen. And if they did get spotted he wouldn't be able to run that far with her after his mad dash through Musutafu. *Even if I could I don't even know where I am or where the police station is.*

His eyes catch on the cashier who's moved behind the counter to straighten the items there. He waves at her wildly until he's caught her attention, frantically pressing a finger to his lips when she looks like she's about speak. Midoriya checks that the man hasn't moved before he takes the girl's hand in his and rushes towards the counter.

It'd be better to avoid confrontation. Keep her out of sight.

"I-I need you to take her and hide, call the police, I think the man she was with abducted her," he keeps his voice low and continues throwing glances over his shoulder to check where the man is.

"Eimi?" Midoriya's head whips around to see the man's brown hair peeking over the aisle closest to the exit, heading their way.

The girl goes limp in Izuku's arms as he quickly picks her up and swings her over the counter where the wide eyed cashier takes hold of her. His hands shake as he passes the girl. "Get down," Midoriya whispers before ducking behind the end of a nearby isle, his heart racing.

"Eimi where'd you go?" Midoriya can hear the agitation that he's trying to mask. The boy takes a calming breath before casually stepping into the aisle that the kidnapper's in, pretending to study a bag of chips to his right.

"Hey kid, have you seen a little girl in here?"

Izuku puts on a surprised face when he turns towards the man. "Not

since I came in.” The fifteen year old looks around for the girl he knows isn't there, masking a grimace when he sees the head of the cashier quickly peek over the counter, a phone pressed to her ear. “Do you need help looking?”

There’s a frown that flickers across the kidnapper’s face. “No, it’s fine, thanks for the offer though.” The man shoves his hands in his coat pockets and Midoriya tenses for a possible fight, but he simply walks past the boy and towards the door.

Suddenly, Izuku’s torn.

The kidnapper is obviously ready to abandon the girl given the wary glance he throws at the cash register, yet something in Midoriya says not to let him get away. Something tells him that he’ll just try again with another little girl on another day in another convenience store only next time he’ll succeed. His eyes jerk back towards the counter where he knows Eimi and the cashier are hiding, then back to the kidnapper as he gets closer to the door. He’s ready to charge the man as he goes to push the door open but pauses. *I could be putting those two in danger.*

He’d be dealing with an unknown skill set, unknown weapons, an unknown quirk. *But* , he thinks, *heroes deal with that same unknown everyday.*

“You’re not a hero,” his mind hisses, *“You’ll never be a hero.”*

In the end the decision is made for him, because the man doesn’t go to open the door, he goes to *lock* it. The soft click it makes has Midoriya immediately on edge, muscles tensing and stance shifting. “Alright brat, come out before I kill everyone.”

There’s a muffled whimper from behind the counter and Izuku can’t tell if it’s from the cashier or Eimi. Either way it brings a manic grin to the kidnapper’s face that has Midoriya’s blood curdling.

“You can't save anyone, you're just a Deku.”

“This isn't the dojo, people fight back with quirks here.”

Maybe in another universe he could have been able to say that his feet moved on their own, maybe in another universe he could say that he didn’t hesitate because of the voice in his head. But, maybe in another universe that voice wouldn’t have sent him running halfway across the city, wouldn’t have brought him here, maybe in another universe he

might not have saved them. In this one he will.

He's tired, limbs shaky, whether from fear or overuse he's not sure. But, his body doesn't fail to respond to the threat, his training ingrained too deeply to let fatigue weaken his punches or buckle his knees. Having a staff on hand would've been preferable, if only to put some distance between him and his opponent, but life is hardly so accommodating.

Instead he settles for the broom the cashier had left out, it's scarcely a suitable replacement, but it'll give him the distance he needs. Midoriya points the broom handle at the man, the other end tucked securely beneath arm, "Stay where you are."

The kidnapper snickers, "The hell you gonna to with a broom."

There's a cocktail of fear and determination swirling in the boy's eyes as the edges of his lips tick upward in a wobbly smile. "I wonder." The man lunges and Izuku spins on the ball of his foot, before bringing out the end of the broom from under his arm and slamming the brush cap into the side of the man's face. There's a satisfying crack of plastic against bone and a rewarding grunt of pain from the kidnapper. "I've already taken the time to call the police so I suggest you either stay here and wait politely, or I can make you." Midoriya falls back into a defensive position as the attacker cradles his face, Izuku can see a thin stream of blood sliding between the man's fingers as he looks back at the fifteen year old.

"You're gonna regret doing that."

"Am I? Because honestly I'm feelin' pretty satisfied at the moment." It feels like someone has mangled his brain to mouth filter and he's left to wonder how those words came out of the bumbling, fear steeped chaos that is his mind. The casual smirk on his face feels like it's made of thin glass and his legs tremble undetectably despite his calm outward appearance.

The man charges at him with his right fist drawn back, his face is twisted with fury as blood drips from a split above his brow. His form is sloppy, but Midoriya recognizes the power behind his punch. There'd been no obvious physical manifestation of the man's quirk, and Izuku hasn't noticed any indication that he's activated one. So, he leads his counterattack with the broom cap again, slamming the hard plastic into the slight bone protrusion on the kidnapper's wrist when he extends his arm. Pushing it off course as Midoriya goes to side step

the blow and send the man stumbling past him. The impact is followed by a sharp cry of pain and muttered curses.

The man cradles his wrist to his chest.

Maybe it's because of the stress from the last few days, or maybe it's the build up of unreleased spite that makes his mouth form the words, "That all you got?" His fear is slowly being replaced by anger. "You know I've been having a pretty *shitty* week," Izuku spits, "I got told to kill myself, got rejected from the hero course, and I've been kept up by countless nightmares over the last few days. I just ran halfway across Musutafu, and I'm both physically and mentally exhausted, but you know what?" Midoriya asks as a tired smirk tugs at his lips. "It'll all be worth it if I get to kick your ass." This time Izuku is the one to charge at the man, broom raised like a bat in a way that sends the kidnapper ducking down one of the aisles. His impromptu weapon slams into one of the shelves, scattering bags of chips across the floor. Midoriya adjusts his grip on the broom as he moves into the narrow aisle to follow the man.

The kidnapper grabs something off a nearby self and throws a box of instant rice at the boy that Izuku easily dodges before rushing towards the attacker. He feints with the broom and and instead sends his foot out into a side kick that makes contact with the man's chest, the impact sending air rushing from his lungs. Midoriya makes to pull away but finds his foot caught between the kidnapper's arms, his hands wrapped around boy's ankle.

It only takes a few moments for the boy to recognize the burning heat that's radiating from the man's palms. There's a twisted grin pulling at his lips that mutates into one of Bakugou's at the sensation of the searing heat on Izuku's skin. It doesn't help that the man's eyes are a similar dark vermillion.

"Believe that you'll be born with a quirk in the next life and

take a swan dive off the roof!"

There's a spike of fear that shoots through him, freezing his limbs despite the nonstop signals howling at him to " *Pull Away! PULL AWAY!* ". Somewhere he registers the flashing red lights of a police car reflecting off the window, shaking him out of his panic. *He's not Katsuki,* Midoriya grits his teeth, *Katsuki's quirk burns hotter.*

The broom is still in his hands but the villain doesn't seem to register it as a threat as the palms gripping his ankle grow hotter. It's a sloppy

swing with the fear in his throat, but it manages to catch the man in the temple and his grip on the boy loosens enough for Izuku to break free. The fifteen year old twists out the hold and delivers back side kick to the man's chin. He stumbles back, clutching his jaw, and Midoriya takes the opportunity to discard the broom and charge the attacker.

Izuku's hands wrap around the back of the man's neck, pulling him down and driving a knee into his unguarded stomach. Midoriya drops his hold when the brunette hunches over. The boy takes advantage of his prone position and uses it to hurl him onto the tiled floor stomach first. Izuku quickly jerks one arm into a hammerlock while he pins the other hand to the ground with a foot, careful to avoid the kidnapper's heated palms. He can hear someone pounding on the doors and sees the cashier, cradling Eimi to her chest, sprint through his peripheral towards the entrance.

Two officers rush to his aid and Midoriya warns them of the man's quirk as they take his place and lock a pair of quirk suppressing cuffs around his wrists. Izuku watches as the two drag him out to the police car outside, shoving the man into the backseat. Another car pulls up behind them, two more officers stepping out, one of the original cops point them in his direction. There's a female officer that breaks away to talk with Eimi and the cashier, and an man with two small horns that approaches Midoriya.

"My name is officer Fujimori, do you mind if I ask you a few questions?"

"That man," Izuku states instead, eyes glued to the first police car, "He'll probably need medical treatment." Now that everything's over Izuku feels his hands start to shake, he shoves them in his pockets, shifting from foot to foot.

The officer arches a brow.

"I-I didn't know what his quirk was so I couldn't afford to pull any punches. At the very least he'll have some painful bruising to remember me by."

"The call we got says that you two were fighting, were you injured?"

Midoriya sends a furtive glance down at his ankle. There are two bright red hand prints circling the base, but he doesn't think they'll even blister. "No."

The police escort him and Eimi back to the nearby station where a frantic Inko arrives half an hour later. Eimi had already been reunited with her actual father, the man having shown up earlier in a complete state of disarray before the two of them were swept into an interrogation room for privacy.

He'd been running through a few details with officer Fujimori in a different interrogation room when his mother barges in. And, forgoing all formalities, wraps him in a tight hug the moment she's close enough. Midoriya can feel the fabric on his shoulder dampen, if the same thing happens to her shirt, no one mentions it.

They don't get back until well after dinner, though his stomach never signals its arrival, too rent with nerves to notice. Inko saves whatever words she might have had for him, and instead merely watches as the boy slips into his room for the night and collapses into bed. He's still wearing the same clothes, and the burns on his ankle throb uncomfortably in time to his heartbeat. But, he's completely drained, all of his adrenaline having finally sizzled out, leaving him as an empty husk.

For once he's too exhausted dream of anything.

He wakes up his phone ringing on the nightstand. It's Friday, and from the sunlight streaming through his window, too early. He can hear Inko down the hall, the woman getting ready for work from the sound of it. He doesn't even check the caller ID before silencing it and quickly falling back asleep.

When his phone rings for the second time that morning only an hour later he's ready to throw it out the window and roundhouse kick the first person that tries to pick up its remains. He doesn't. But, when the third call starts coming through, waking him up for the *third* time, he does decline the call and slam it ruthlessly down on his nightstand.

The next time he hears a phone ring it's from Inko's cellphone a few minutes later. "Oh! Chee-san! I meant to call you the other day and completely forgot," there's a pause, "No, he's not been sick it's that…" his mother sighs, voice noticeably quieter, "A-A lot's happened. He got a letter from UA the other day… They're not allowing him to try for the course he wanted. So, he's been…Well, he's been as good as can be expected. Just yesterday-"

Midoriya rolls over to face the wall, his bed creaking with the movement. He pulls a pillow over his ears, and closes his eyes against the primary colors of his fading All Might posters. He doesn't want to listen anymore, doesn't want to think. And here he'd almost forgotten about the rejection letter rotting in his desk drawer.

His phone buzzes beside him on his nightstand and he rolls over, ready to actually throw it out the window this time before he sees the alert. There's three missed calls from Chee Sensei, a few concerned texts from his dojo classmates, and at the top, a pop-up notification from one of the hero news sites he follows.

Vigilante Knuckleduster Stops B…

He stares at the headline for a moment before tapping on it, opening the link.

Vigilante Knuckleduster Stops Bank Robbery!

Knuckleduster, a relatively well known vigilante, saves the lives of eight civilians after a villian with an electricity quirk attempted to rob a bank. Witnesses say that no heroes had yet to arrive on scene when the vigilante appeared, easily taking out the culprit after a short fight following the villain's attempt to take several men, women, and children hostage. The culprit, Suzuki Akira, has been previously involved in several others robberies, one in which two civilians lost their lives. Local law enforcement did not comment on the vigilante's heroic actions, only stating that they "we're glad that no civilians had been seriously injured".

Izuku blinks, eyes flickering back up the the first sentence, gaze catching on the word *'vigilante'* . He hears a whisper in the back of his mind.

"He's not my daddy."

"He took me from my daddy."

"We'll get everything sorted out. Yeah?"

“...well known vigilante, saves the lives of eight civilians...”

“You’re gonna regret doing that.”

“Am I?”

“We're glad that no civilians were seriously injured.”

“You did a good job kid,” officer Fujimori tells him. They're both leaned back against a wall, waiting for Midoriya’s mother to finish up any formalities. “Things could've gone much worse if you hadn't been there when you were and if you hadn't done what you did.”

Izuku watches as his mother signs something at one of the detective’s desks.

“You'd be a great hero kid.”

The words leave a bitter taste in the back of Midoriya’s mouth. I'd make a good hero, *he thinks,* If only someone would give me a chance.

Midoriya doesn’t remember his lungs stopping, doesn’t remember his hands clenching in a white knuckled grip around his phone, doesn’t remember when sun in his chest reignites. There’s only the understanding that it’s back, small and flickering, but there. Tears spring unbidden from Izuku’s eyes as he grips at the fabric over his heart.

Inko comes rushing into his room at the sound of the sob that breaks past his lips, her phone hanging loosely in her hand. “Izuku?” She mutters a, “I’m sorry Chee-san I-I’ll call you back later,” into the speaker before she ends the call and drops the phone on the floor. Then Inko’s across the room before he blinks, wrapping Izuku into a tight embrace reminiscent of last night.

She mistakes the shaking of his shoulders as sobs, and his tears for ones of desperation. He lets out a warbled laugh into her shoulder, one that sounds more like a cry, and Inko holds him tighter.

He laughs as he cries because his heart is finally back.

He hadn't really thought about saving that girl, hadn't thought of what doing so had meant. But, he had *saved* someone, *protected them.* He'd defeated a villain using his own power, had done something no one else believed he could do. He'd been a *hero* to that girl.

If UA wouldn't give him a chance then the solution seemed simple, he'd give himself one. He'd force the world to see him, force them to recognize his hard work. He wasn't missing a quirk, it was simply that everyone else had been given an advantage. He wasn't broken, or useless, or incapable, and he'd prove it by outrunning all of them, he who was quirkless, he who had started in last.

Chapter End Notes

> So I got excited and posted early adfjasdfklasdjf
> Thank you for all of the support on the first chapter! It really surprised me!
> Until next week! (For real this time adfkjla)

Gravity

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next day brings with it the weekend, a small blessing that grants him time to gather his thoughts. The fifteen year old isn't to sure where to start, the whole idea still feeling like a dream itself. *I'm going to save people,* he thinks, Eimi's face flashing in his mind. *But to do so I'll have to break the law.*

Midoriya tries not to think of that aspect too much just yet, worried he'd end up scaring himself away from what he needed to do. So, instead he pulls out a notebook and makes a list of the things he'd need and labels it 'hero supplies'.

He'd need a weapon, and a disguise, and a local map of hero activity would be a necessity. The boy is sure he'd be able to find some information on the hero forms he frequented. But, he doubted he'd get ahold all the intel he'd need until he found himself walking the streets and experiencing the patterns for himself.

The fifteen year old spends hours in his room thinking over the logistics of him being a vigilante before he gets side tracked with costume design and vigilante hero names.

The costume is of course impossible with his current resources. Much of his past allowance had gone to hero merch, and what was left wasn't nearly enough to pay for the sketches in his notebook. Not to mention that anyone he got to make it for him would be dragged into his vigilante scheme, seeing as they too would be breaking several major laws.

It's already one by the time emerges from his room, looking only a little better than a corpse. Inko is gone when he comes out for an extremely late breakfast. There's a note for him on the counter telling him that she'll be back around five and to not forget to eat. It's unusual for her not to say anything to him directly before leaving so he figures that at some point she must have peeked into his room and decided to leave him be.

There's a small seed of guilt that plants itself in his stomach at the thought of how much worry and stress he'd put the woman through.

And, he realizes only then, that she would be clueless to the meaning behind last night's breakdown. He obviously couldn't inform her of its significance. So, he'd have to replace his revelation with something mom-friendly, if only to put an end to her fears.

They don't speak much when she returns, a pregnant tension hanging over the two. Inko wants desperately to ask what last night had been about, but, instead, she holds her tongue. She makes katsudon again, and watches the boy carefully from across the table as he eats. Her eyes flicker from one point to another as if just looking at him for too long would leave him shattered again.

He needs to say something that will stop her from worrying, both for her sake and his. So Izuku sets aside his chopsticks, lets out a shaky sigh and says what he's been thinking about since he'd seen her note, says what he's known since he received his rejection letter. "I'm going to apply for UA's general education course."

The words hurt, but Midoriya knows that no matter how much it pains him, he'd never been willing to let go of UA. Even though it feels like he's giving in. Even though it feels like a dismissal of his dreams. Even though it feels like he's accepting his fate of being nothing more than quirkless, he can't let it go.

He has to remind himself that, despite what the voice in his head says, he's not accepting his fate, that he's rewriting it, defying it. *I don't have to be a hero,* Izuku thinks, *I just have to save people.*

Midoriya watches his mother's eyes light up, watches the worry melt from the lines in her face. *Those lines would only get deeper if I told you what I'm about to do.*

The irony of what he's planning is lost on him. The idea that there'd be a vigilante sat within the midst of Japan's top hero school never even crossing the boy's mind. Because in his head there's an image of an older Izuku. He's dressed in black and Midoriya can see the thin stripes of scars around the backs of his hands and illuminated within the stippling of freckles across his cheeks. The man is bruised and battered but he stands strong before him, proud and resilient and *happy* .

It's the image of a man who's achieved his dreams. It's the image that Izuku will strive for, the picture of the person he wants to become.

Inko doesn't know what to think of the determination that she watches solidify on her son's face. But, it lessens her worry further, makes her

hopeful for what's to come. There's still a melancholic expression that she sees pass across his face from time to time, but Inko prays that soon enough it too will disappear altogether.

---

r/heroesofmusutafu · Posted by u/echoplasma three months ago

Where Are The Heroes?

248 upvotes

Okay so I don't know if it's just my neighborhood but I've been noticing that I haven't seen as many heroes around my apartment anymore. Over the last few years the neighborhood has gotten a lot rougher so there's been a lot more crime recently but at the same time the number of heroes has gone down??

It doesn't make any sense, you'd think with more crime there'd be more heroes but it's been the exact opposite around here. I was wondering if anyone else was experiencing something similar where they are because it's gotten to the point where I'm kind of scared to go outside of my apartment now.

.

transatsushii - 26 points, two months ago

well ill tell you right now if you're looking for a place with lots of heroes you'll wanna go into the nicer and more populated parts of the city

the only thing heroes really care about is fame, money, and recognition

sure they might get a lot more work in what you called the ‘rougher’ parts of the city but more work doesn’t necessarily equate to fame and fortune

the richer parts of the city get criminals with stronger, flashier quirks (since they think they can get away with more) and where the flashy criminals go so do the attention seeking ‘herhoes’

.

syn_ley - 5 points, two months ago

I’ve been having the same problem in my neighborhood echoplasma, it’s gotten really bad in the past few weeks, just in the last two days alone I’ve heard about five people getting killed, all in different incidents, but I haven’t even seen one not ONE hero patrolling the area

.

klngkuroo - 38 points, two months ago

“herhoes” IM W H E E Z I N G

With the next day comes more nightmares. He should have realized that they wouldn't have simply gone away at the snap of his fingers. But he’d gotten his hopes up after the peaceful sleep he’d had the night before.

Eimi’s being dragged out of the convenience store by her kidnapper, and he can only stand there, quietly watching as she disappears out the door. The image of her distressed face is burned into the backs of his eyelids, it’s a look that doesn't belong on the face of a girl her age.

In the dream he can't help but think, *It's probably just her uncle.*

And even though he knows it's not, even though he desperately wants to reach out and take her hand, his body won't do anything because, *What if I'm wrong. What if it is just a friend of her father that she doesn't like.*

Officer Fujimori is there as well, replacing the cashier behind the register. He leans against the counter, he too watching as the girl is dragged away. He turns to stare at the boy with a smile that's more suited for Bakugou and a voice matching the caustic one in his head. "What a shame," he surmises, "If only you hadn't hesitated."

To take his mind off the dream he decides to continue planning his start as a vigilante. He's certain Chee Sensei would notice if any of the dojo's staffs went missing. And he'd be too worried that anything he bought could be traced back to him. So, Izuku falls back on the pipe he'd used for training at Dagobah the last three years. It's not something he'd like to use for vigilante work, but it's something he's had a lot of experience handling, even if he'd never used it against any *corporeal* opponents.

His disguise also comes up lacking, but for a middle schooler with little money, it's to be expected. He dons a pair of dark sweatpants and a black hoodie that he tucks his curls into. He pulls the pipe from the back of his closet and decides he'll sneak a white face mask from their small stash in the kitchen. In the end the only thing he actually buys is a pair of red contacts.

Midoriya digs a pair of old knee and elbow pads from the back of his closet and slips them on over his clothes. But, other than those his protection is non-existent. It's worrisome, but the more he thinks about it he realizes that there's not much else he can do at this point. The items he'd need for his excursions wouldn't be available for civilian purchase and even then he wouldn't have the money for it.

Part of him wonders, as he pulls on the clothes, if it's too soon to be going out. It'd only been two days since he'd decided to be a vigilante and now he was going out to commit his first planned act of vigilantism. But, despite the guilt on account of his mother and despite the fear on behalf of himself, something pushes him to continue.

So Izuku listens for the quiet breathing of his mother before slinking out of his room and sliding the balcony's door open. The drop to the

concrete below is daunting, but it's nothing he hasn't done before to get some extra training Dagobah. Midoriya drops the pipe down first, tossing it into a set of bushes nearby, before hauling himself over the ledge and dropping down to hang from the sill. The concrete digs painfully into his palms before he lets go and drops down onto the ledge of the balcony just below theirs. It's a precarious position and he almost tips off and to the ground below at one point before catching himself. Adrenaline rushes through him when he looks down, still a good one story drop to go. But, unlike in his own apartment he can still see a light on through the sliding door, so he's quick to drop into another hang, pushing the rest of his body away from the wall with what leverage he can manage and drops.

Landing hurts, pain spiking up his legs when he hits, but he smooths out some of the impact with a roll. His palms throb from the concrete and his feet and knees ache from where he'd taken a majority of the impact, but he knows from experience that it'll fade. He retrieves his pipe from the bushes and looks around.

And now that he's here, now that he's ready, he has no idea what to do. He knows what he *wants* to do. He wants to save people, wants to bring criminals to justice, he wants to prove himself worthy. But, is this really the right way to go about doing it?

*"It's the **only** way,"* his mind whispers.

But there *are* other ways to be a hero, he could be a police officer or a doctor, he could be a psychologist or a social worker.

"But that's not what you want. They'd never be enough for you."

And it's right about that, those things would never be able to give him what being a hero could, what being a vigilante *will* . They would never be able to give him the satisfaction, the elation, of knowing that he'd directly saved the life of someone from a villain who'd been seeking to take it, control it, *abuse* it. He'd sipped the ambrosia, and now there was nothing else that'd be able to replace it.

He's not sure what to do or where to go, but he's got to do *something* . So, he sets off down the sidewalk. It's late, but there are still people decorating the streets and as a result he sticks to the shadows, ducking down alleys when he can, certain that his pipe would draw too many suspicious eyes. Though there are several times within the next two hours that he's forced to turn back upon encountering a dead end he deems the lack of attention worth it.

He listens for cries of help, but the closest he comes to hearing any is a few peels of shrieking laughter from a group of inebriated college students. And he's frustrated. It feels like Eimi's situation had been a fluke, like now even fate wouldn't give him a chance to prove his worth.

So he burrows further into the city, slinking down alley after alley until he's in a part of town he doesn't recognize. The streets he finds himself on remind him of the area where he'd met Eimi, dark and teeming with criminal activity. Which, he figures, is exactly the part of town he wants to be in.

It isn't long after that he runs across a mugger. She's got a man held at knife point, pressing him into the wall of the alley with her hand.

"H-Hey!" Izuku curses himself for the stutter as the woman's head whips around to glare at him.

"The fuck you want?" She waves her knife at him, trying to scare him off. "Get outta here 'for I cut you up too." Her gaze drifts away from him and back to the man she's mugging.

He's scared, but he's fifteen and about to play at being a vigilante so he can't really say that it's not expected. There's a woman with a knife, an unknown quirk, and a hostage. He thinks about leaving, about turning around and calling the police. He thinks about going home and sleeping and pretending he'd never thought of this whole vigilante idea in the first place.

But, his dream comes back to him, *"What a shame. If only you hadn't hesitated."*

He grits his teeth, the man's face mimicking that of the Eimi from his dreams. Izuku steels his resolve, and sends his pipe slamming into the back of the woman's head.

"I won't hesitate, bitch."
He feels almost guilty doing so, deliberately aiming for the head with a weapon was a strictly forbidden tatic within any professional dojo. The head was a vital part of your body and injuries to it could be deadly if an attack was poorly executed. O*r well executed depending on situation*, he thinks briefly.

If there was too much force or the impact was badly placed it could result in serious damage. But, for the safety of both himself and the man she'd been robbing, a swift end was necessary, especially when

unknown quirks were factored in.

The woman crumbles under the force of the blow and Midoriya has to drop his pipe to catch her before she falls, gently setting her down on the alley's floor before he stands back up.

Midoriya turns to the man, whose fearful stare is trained on him. "Are you okay?" Izuku asks, his voice muffled by the mask. His heart is in his throat and everytime he tries to think about what he'd doing it make a leap into his mouth, cutting off any other words that he might say.

The guy tries to stammer a response. But, in the end nothing coherent comes out.

Midoriya swallows his fear and speaks again instead, "Do you have a cellphone on you? It's probably best if we call the cops. They'll be able to take care of her." He glances at the woman at his feet, her breathing soft and even, face almost peaceful while unconscious. Before he can speak to the man further he catches movement at the far end of alley.

Another woman comes around the corner, her flaming red hair giving off a soft glow. "Mika you done yet?" She hasn't noticed them, too engrossed with the phone in her hands. She mutters a quiet curse as the passcode she puts in comes back incorrect. "I need your quirk to open this phone, I'm usually good at just guessing but I've only got three tries left." There's a beat, where no one says anything. The only sounds the distant rumbling of an overnight passenger train left to fill the silence.

She looks up and the three are frozen in place like deer stranded in headlights, unable to look away from each other. She glances at the body laid at the boy's feet, eyes glued to her friend's unmoving form. Izuku hears the man behind him shuffle backwards. His movement acting as a catalyst that sets off an explosion of violence. The newcomer moves first, rushing at them.

"The fuck did you do to Mika!"

Izuku steps forward, pushing the man further behind him with an arm and a silent "run" that flashes through the boy's red eyes when he glances back.

The woman's hair flares brighter as she drops the phone and pulls a pocket knife from her jacket. The jab is clumsy, inept enough to

remind him of his first day sparring with a partner, but there's a sharp weapon in this hand, one that's coming towards him. And, there's a moment where Izuku freezes up again, because this is an actual fight, and that's an actual knife, and it's his life and the man's behind him that he's defending. Then the knife is there and he can only run off pure instinct.

Her arm is coming in low and at an angle, aiming for his gut. He brings his right hand up to meet it, pushing her arm away to where he can wrap his left hand around her wrist. He twists it into a position where her elbow is forced to lock and turns his body parallel to hers, using the mugger's own momentum to redirect the knife past him.

Then, he brings is elbow down.

Midoriya can hear the woman's cry of pain when he drives his elbow into her locked one, can hear the bone cracking, and the knife clattering to the pavement when she drops to her knees. He can hear his own heavy breathing, can hear the man's frantic voice behind him, can hear the sound of the same passenger train roaring in the distance. And, he can feel it, can feel her elbow give beneath his, can feel the muscles in her wrist spasm with pain, can feel his heart pounding in his chest.

Her flaming hair floats up to meet him, but the sensation isn't one of burning. It's soft. The warm feeling grounds him and after a time he's able to gently release her wrist from his hand. It falls to the ground and the woman cries out again as she sobs. He can hear a string of random curses falling from her mouth as she cradles the arm as best she can, trying not to move it. "Mika," she sobs, "Mika wake up."

He turns from the woman, the man that had been behind him now peeking around the corner of the alley's opening, a phone pressed to his ear.

"Tell them they'll need an ambulance."

With that he picks up his pipe, still laying on the ground near the first woman, and walks out of the alley. He feels numb as he brushes past the man, listening to the sobs of the fiery woman like one would dull elevator music. He can hear it, and if his rabbiting heart is anything to go by, his body is reacting to it. But, it's like his mind hasn't quite caught up yet.

He stumbles out onto the sidewalk, ignoring the calls from the guy he'd saved to 'come back'. He can already hear sirens in the distance

and if he hadn't been so out of it he'd have been able to tell that the sound was coming from in front of him. Instead, it's the flashing of lights through the window of a corner store a few minutes later that warns him, leaving him with barely enough time to stagger into an alley.

Midoriya stumbles into the wall closest to him, free hand clutching at his chest. Suddenly it's hard to breathe and he feels like the ground is swaying beneath him. The alley reeks of garbage and one of his contacts is bothering him and his exhaustion is starting to catch up. But, he feels like laughing. It bubbles up unbinned and unwarranted and Midoriya feels a bit unhinged in doing so, but he laughs. Laughs until he actually can't breathe and he's clutching at the stitch in his side and using his staff as a crutch just to keep himself standing.

"This is insane," he gasps out. He wipes at the tears at the corners of his eyes, still quietly laughing as his adrenaline fades.

He'd saved another person's life, and though he feels a small pang of guilt when he thinks back to the fiery-haired woman, he feels no regret. He's sure that there were other courses of action that he could've taken that would have resulted in less injuries on her behalf, but he tries not to dwell on it. It was his inexperience in dealing with another's bloodlust that led to the woman's injuries` and there was only one way to fix that, experience.

Once the sirens have faded into the distance he steps back out onto the sidewalk, rubbing at his irritated eye as he goes. He's more aware now, the haze of adrenaline having burned off by the police lights like early morning fog by the sun.

It takes him half an hour of wandering to find himself in an area of town he recognizes and another hour to make it back to their apartment. And, once he arrives he's somehow able to make his way back up to their balcony through his crashing adrenaline high.

Midoriya kicks the pipe under his bed, tosses the mask in the trash, tugs his hoodie off, elbow pads and all, and throws it to the back of his closet with the old sneakers he'd worn. He flops face down into bed, still in sweatpants and knee pads still strapped on. But, Izuku can't bring himself to care as the air conditioning cools the sweaty skin of his back.

The bedside clock taunts him the with the time and he falls asleep watching the numbers glow red in the darkness of his room.

Chapter End Notes

I want to thank everyone for their support! I was definitely surprised by all the kudos and comments! Until next week!

Equinox

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When he wakes up two and a half hours later his eyes *burn* . It's surprisingly early, just before his alarm is set to go off. The is sun barely up and Inko's still asleep when he stumbles his way out of his room and towards the bathroom. He's fighting exhaustion and when he looks in the mirror he realizes his eyes are bloodshot and his irises are still red.

I forgot to take them out.

It feels like he's trying to peel the contacts from his eyes when he tries taking them out. But there's an almost instant relief that has him slumping over the counter once they're gone.

He's too tired to notice the footsteps just outside the bathroom until Inko knocks quietly on the door, woken up by her son's mad rush through the apartment. She doesn't wait for a response before slowly cracking the door, rubbing the sleep from her eyes. "Is everything okay sweetie?"

He's managed to get both contacts out by the time she opens the door. But, the boy is still wearing last night's sweatpants and knee pads.

He freezes, unable to reply for a moment, frozen in fear that she'll somehow realize what he's done.

"Izuku?"

"G-Good morning! I just had something in my eye! No problem!" It's enough to draw her gaze away from where they'd been drifting towards his knees. She looks him in the eyes, studying them.

"Oh dear, they're so bloodshot!" She takes a step closer, a furrow forming between her brows. "Make sure you flush whatever it is out." She quickly turns towards their medicine drawer, rummaging through it. "We should have some eye drops-"

"It's fine mom! I already got it out!"

She turns back towards him, hands coming up to cradle his cheeks as

she studies his eyes again. “Did you get something in both of them sweetheart?”

He sputters out an incoherent response, hands whirling about his head, trying to wave the woman’s worry off. “I-It’s fine! All taken care of mom!”

She huffs out a breath, “If you’re sure then.”

When she finally leaves to start breakfast Izuku is quick to tear off the kneepads, tugging them down his legs. He throws them onto the corner, wide eyed and panting as he stares at them. *That was close.* The boy sighs, picking them back up and hiding them in the waistband of his pants. He peeks out the door, watching to see if Inko would come back to check on him. When he hears her rummaging through the kitchen he deems it safe enough and makes another mad dash, this time for his room.

Last night feels like a fever dream, Mika and the woman with fiery hair like a mere figment of his imagination. For now he’s forced to discard them and get ready for school. As much as he hates to think about going back he can’t miss anymore class if he wants to keep up with his studies. So, he tugs on his uniform and hides his vigilante things where they belong. The sweatshirt goes back on its hanger, the pants go back in his drawer. The elbow and knee pads are put in a bin under his bed and he leaves the pipe there with them. He’s still exhausted after only a little more than two hours of sleep, and decides he’ll need to come up with a better schedule if he wants to maintain his current lifestyle.

So, when he gets home he does his homework, eats dinner, tucks into bed at eight, and wakes up again at eleven after Inko has gone to bed. He stays out for three hours, kicks a little butt, saves a person or two, keeps a cat from becoming roadkill, and returns at two to sleep for another four or so hours before waking up to do it all over again. But, he still wakes up tired, so the dark circles strung beneath his eyes become a new accessory.

He falls into this loop like a dog chasing its own tail. He slips into a recurring pattern of perpetually no sleep and trying not to nod off during class. He’s stuck to small time criminals thus far, drug dealers, muggers, a few thieves. One of which that had been stupid enough to mistake him for his partner.

And for the most part he handles them easily, though he still managed

to get injured from time to time. It's mostly bruising so the wounds are easy enough to pass off as one's from the dojo. And, on the occasion that he comes home with a small cut or two in obvious places all he had to do is slap a large enough bandaid on it and claim he'd tripped.

But, there's an unforeseen problem with only fighting criminals that he can handle.

On the occasion that he comes across someone that he *can't* beat and there's nothing he can do, he finds that a piece of his soul *breaks* . The times that he's forced to sit on the sidelines, watching, waiting for the *real* heroes to arrive. And, everytime he has to dial the police or somehow lead a hero to the scene, a little part of his sun burns out, fizzling like a sparkler at the end of its fuse. But, there are moments worse than even these. They're the moments where he jumps into the fray *knowing* he can't win and is forced to retreat. They're moments where his sun is doused in water and his heart turns to ash.

So, over the next month, as he becomes more confident in his abilities, he stops making as many anonymous calls to the police station. He stops waiting in the shadows for actual heroes to arrive. He stops agonizing over not being able to do more and just starts doing. He'd worked himself up to the higher level criminals through experience. But, he hadn't yet figured out where this new level stopped.

He still didn't know his limits.

The villain he's chasing gets the upper hand in the alley they're in. Their abilities more suited for this type of close quarters combat. The alley is a narrow one, narrow enough that newfound vigilante can't use the pipe without scraping the walls. So, he'd dropped it, and that's where everything had gotten worse.

Before Midoriya had learned to use a staff, he'd been trained to fight and defend himself with his body which is why he hadn't thought much on his choice of letting it go. But, he'd failed to account for the man's quirk. Thus far he'd rarely encountered criminals with quirks that were useful in combat situations. So, he hadn't expected the man's hand to turn knifelike in the few seconds before he struck. The vigilante had been expecting a normal hand, so he'd made the decision to merely redirect the attack from where it'd been aiming for his center mass to a simple glancing blow off his ribs. It shouldn't have hurt, but Midoriya had failed to realize that the man's hand hadn't been in a fist. Instead he had held his hand out flat, fingers

pulled together in a way that fashioned the yakuza's hand into a spear-like tip.

The skin around his ribs isn't thick, so when the man's steely hand slices through his side he can feel the fingers scrap against bone.

He jerks back, not expecting the pain, his own hand reaching up to cover it. He freezes up. It's a deep cut, one that would undoubtedly require stitches even without looking at the wound. He's scared to glance at it, scared to move, scared to think about what he'll tell his mom.

The villain doesn't give him much time to be scared.

Maybe he doesn't want to kill the kid, maybe it's because he's got somewhere he has to be, but for whatever reason the encounter moves towards the rooftops. The villain flees up a row of balconies, only big enough to hang out laundry, like one would a ladder. He's less skilled at the climb than the vigilante, but he shows no hesitation and Midoriya's losing a decent amount of blood from his wound.

But, the boy had made too many climbs like this before to be so easily left behind. Fire laces through his side at the ascent, movement aggravating the wound and more blood pooling down his side and soaking his hoodie. The man reaches the top before him and jumps the narrow gap between buildings with ease.

The vigilante's breathing is heavy and he's trying to focus on where to put his hands and feet rather than the flaring pain in his ribs. It's a hard feat to accomplish, but eventually he makes it to the top, the barest edges of his vision stained black. He can see the man dodge an air unit on the next roof over as Midoriya gets a running start and sails over the five foot gap with ease. He stumbles on the rooftops' gravel during his landing, using his hands to catch himself from eating it. Izuku pushes himself back up, spying the yakuza member already leaping across to the next roof through his steadily darkening vision. His side is sticky with fresh blood, his wound still weeping thick, red tears. But, he continues on, following the man's trail.

The next roof over belongs to another apartment building, the gap isn't much larger than the last so he doesn't hesitate in his run up. But, the black at the edges of his vision is creeping further and further into his field of view and he can't feel his wound anymore, can't feel much of anything anymore. So when he takes his final step he can't actually feel that he's misplaced it.

He misses the jump, brutally. Slamming into the side of the next building with a force to rattle teeth and crack ribs. He claws desperately at the roof's ledge, trying to find a grip, but gravity eventually wins out and manages to pull him back. He slips down the side of the building, the brick dragging at his skin and at his clothes.

This life ended way too quickly.

In the moments in which Izuku is free falling Bakugou's voice comes back to him. Perhaps it's because of the situation, perhaps it's because his words had cut the boy so deeply. Either way Bakugou Katsuki's barking laughter rings in the vigilante's ears.

"If you want to be a hero that badly, there's a quick way to do it."

He reaches out an hand towards the roof's ledge, but it's too far now.

"Believe that you'll be born with a quirk in the next life and take a swan dive off the roof!"

Midoriya had never believed in reincarnation. But, he thinks that even if he was reborn, that fate would still somehow manage to curse him with the destiny of a quirkless child.

He thinks he's dying. But, landing comes *too* quickly. His feet hit with a resounding bang on a rusted fire escape some ten feet from the top of the roof. His knees give out beneath him, head colliding with one of the stairs as his body folds into itself. He's only able to register the burst of pain and the 'not death' signal his brain is screaming before he passes out on the landing.

---

r/vigilantes · Posted by u/oofidyploof four days ago

Vigilante in Musutafu!!!

34 upvotes

B E T MUSUTAFU HAS A NEW VIGILANTE

I overheard a group of thugs that's been terrorizing my neighborhood talking about how there's a new vigilante around and shdgshdghdsj you don't understand how happy I am. Someone finally got fed up enough to take matters into their own hand and I'm soooooo ready to

see them kick ass.

Things have gotten quieter around here lately and thanks to them I can finally take my sister to the park without seeing drug dealers lurking around.

The people I overheard called them Piper? So thank you Piper! AND ON BEHALF OF MY SISTER THANKS! IF I SEE YOU I PROMISE NOT TO CALL THE POLICE SO KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK <3

.

allimight - 38 points, two days ago

I'd heard rumors about a vigilante hovering around Musutafu but I didn't think it'd be a newbie, they've been taking down a lot of criminals for someone so new to the scene

---

When Midoriya wakes up it's to daylight overhead, or at least, what he thinks is daylight. In all actuality it's to the warm lighting of a teenager's bedroom, but it's not *his* bedroom. He aches all over, his chest, side, head, hands, knees. His scrapes burn but they're nothing compared to the the flaring pain radiating from his side.

He's on a bed, shirtless, and his head is wrapped in gauze. The boy rolls his head to the side. The room he's in looks part bedroom, part workshop, metal desks piled high with odds and end parts lining one wall. And, the unmade bed he's laying in sitting opposite of it all. There's a black haired boy at his side, leaning into the wound on his ribs. But, Izuku doesn't really register him, more confused than startled by the situation he's found himself in.

"Ah, the data suggested that you wouldn't be awake for awhile. I guess I need to do more reading." There's a painful stabbing sensation followed by a tugging pull at the wound on his side. He jerks up and away at the sudden pain, drawing a noise of disapproval from the seventeen year old.

“Stay still. I was hoping you’d be out for a while longer,” the older boy says, positioning himself back near the wound, “Grit your teeth.” He receives only a last second warning before the teenager plunges a hooked needle back into the vigilante’s bloodied skin.

The boy curses, clenching the bed sheets in his hands.

“Your head was bleeding so I assumed you managed to knock yourself out. Did you fall off the roof?” The boy glances up, gaze turning serious. “You weren’t trying to kill yourself were you?”

Midoriya opens his mouth to disagree with the statement, but all that comes out is a pained grunt when the needle re-enters his tender side.

The teenager leans to the left, reaching for two pills he’d set aside on his nightstand. He offers them to the vigilante, “Here, these should help take the edge off.”

Midoriya hesitates for only a moment before he takes the pills from him and pops them in his mouth, chasing them down with a glass of water that the stranger hands him. The boy pauses, glass at his lips and water already half gone.

“What the hell am I doing?” The words slip from his lips unbidden.

“I would assume it’s because of the concussion you have. But, that’s under the assumption that this is odd behavior for you and that you’re not usually so trusting.” They meet eyes, those of the stranger a deep, near luminescent amber.

“Anyway,” the boy starts, switching topics, “Your life wasn’t in danger. I know how to do everything so I figured I’d save you the cost of a hospital visit. I’m not completely sure how much blood you lost, only a rough estimate based on what’s on your clothes, either way you’ll probably be anemic for awhile. I’d suggest eating food with high iron.” The teenager finishes tying off the last suture, clipping the remaining thread off. “Red meat if you can.”

“You... didn’t call the police?”

“No.”

“Or the hospital?”

“No, I just said I knew how to do everything.”

Midoriya's unsure how to react, left to blink dumbly at the amber eyed teen and his obnoxiously yellow button up. "A stranger lands on your fire escape, bleeding and unconscious, and you just…. Drag them into your room?"

"Pretty much."

Izuku looks at the boy, incredulous. "Why?"

"Does there need to be a reason? You were hurt."

"Normally," Izuku states, trying hard to focus. "If you find someone injured the usual response is to call 119."

"Did you want me to call 119?" The a teen leans back in his seat, staring down the vigilante. The younger boy opens his mouth to respond, but nothing comes out. "Exactly. Dressed the way you were and with the wounds you're sporting, I made the assumption that you'd prefer for me to handle it this way. Plus, like I said earlier, I know how to do everything. My mom's a nurse, so I've read a lot of the old medical books she has laying around."

Midoriya feels absolutely drained. "And you just… what? Memorized them?"

"It's my quirk. I call it Wikipedia, but for legal reasons it's registered as 'Database'," the boy says offhandedly as he pushes away from the bed, sliding across the room in his swivel chair. "It lets me read about anything and memorize it, but once it's up here," he explains, tapping his head, "It's like any other database and I have to have a key term to access any of it. 'How to stitch a wound' won't get me anything, but 'sutures' would pull up any and all information I could possibly need. From there it's up to me to sort through any of the info it brings up." He plucks a first aid kit off of one of the less cluttered tables and rolls back towards the bed. "Unfortunately because there is so much information up there I do tend to forget day to day stuff more easily." He sets the kit down at his feet, turning towards the boy. "What did you say your name was again?"

Midoriya blinks, surprised. "Ah, I didn't. It's Mi-"

The boy quickly cuts him off, a large grin blossoming across the older boy's face. "I'm kidding. I'm surprised that you'd actually try and give me your name so easily though. I get you have a concussion, but," he huffs a laugh, "You're lucky I was the one to find you."

Midoriya open his mouth silently, realization dawning. *What the **hell** am I doing?*

“It’s best to stay away from my mom though. Her quirk is activated through skin contact, any questions she asks you’ll be forced to answer truthfully. She usually wears gloves but,” he shrugs before going back to digging through the first aid kit, pulling out antiseptic spray and gauze. “Lift your arm, not too much though, you don’t need to pull on those stitches. I may know *how* to do all this stuff, but nothing beats experience so I don’t know how well they’ll hold. Speaking of which, I’d suggest laying off the criminal activity until it fully heals.” The teen sprays the wound with antiseptic before gently pressing a gauze pad over the gash. “Hold this.”

“Technically I wasn’t committing any crimes,” Midoriya mumbles in response, cradling the stitched wound as the teen reaches back into the first aid kit.

He pulls out more gauze and begins winding a roll around the vigilante’s torso. “Is that your excuse for vigilantism? They can still get you on assault, both with or without a deadly weapon, trespassing, disturbance of the peace, and, depending on the situation, destruction of property.”

Midoriya stares at him for a moment, startled.

“I recognized your getup, but it took me awhile to sort through everything,” he says, tapping his head. “I started with ‘vigilantes’ because I figured there’d be less info to search through. And, sure enough I read a post two days ago about a new vigilante in the area. I remember being interested and found yet another post talking about what you looked like, minus the pipe of course. I’ll be honest, you’re younger than I imagined. You’re Piper, right?”

Midoriya blinks, dumbstruck at the name. “Piper?”

The teen offers him an amused glance as he wraps another layer of gauze over his wound, it’s tight, the feeling foreign and unwelcome after his years of Muay Thai. But, it’s not painful, so the boy resigns himself to his fate. “You carry around a pipe, right? I’d assume it has something to do with that.”

Izuku turns the name over in his head. “They couldn’t have picked something cooler?”

That draws a laugh from the amber eyed boy as he cuts away the

extra gauze and secures the wrappings in place. “What did you expect? Most criminals aren’t the most original people and from what I hear they’re the ones who came up with it.” The boy tosses the remaining supplies back into the first aid kit before rolling into the center of the room to give the vigilante some space. “Who knows, maybe this is their way of getting revenge.”

Midoriya snorts, shifting to let his legs hang off the side of the bed. “I wouldn’t put it past them.”

“It’s not the worst name though, they could have called you Pipe Boy.”

The vigilante huffs, “I spent all that time thinking about names, but I was never given a chance to use them. You can’t just jump into the middle of a brawl shouting, “It is I! Counterbalance!” Or, “I am here to *Judge* your crimes!”” He leans back, using a hand to prop himself up. “I was hoping for something justice related you know. But, Piper? *Piper?* I mean come *on* .”

“It suits your m.o. Thus far there’s been no evidence of quirk usage, and your outfit isn’t really eye catching, so really it makes sense that the pipe is what draws inspiration.”

Izuku’s eye catches on the neon numbers of the alarm clock on the boy’s nightstand, 3:46. Midoriya curses, stumbling to his feet, red eyes scouring the room his hoodie.

The teen sighs, rolling in his chair towards one of his workshop tables and grabbing the vigilante’s top and gently tossing it to him.

The fifteen year old thanks him with his eyes as he carefully tugs his hoodie back on. The blood stain has dried by now and sits stiff against his inflamed skin. He shoves his curls back beneath the hoodie as he makes his way towards the window.

“Tsukauchi Reo,” the teen calls from behind the vigilante.

Midoriya turns back, surprised. “What?”

“My name,” the teen responds, smirking.

“Didn’t you just get on to me for trying to give you my name?”

The corner of Reo’s lips quirk further upwards. “Did I? I told you I forget things easily.”

Midoriya sighs, a smile of his own twitching at his lips. “Thanks again for saving me.”

“Again? This is the first time you’re thanking me.” The smirk stretches into a smile as he watches the vigilante’s red eyes light up in amusement.

Izuku tugs the window open. “You’re right. I ended up getting on to you for not calling 119 instead.” Midoriya pulls himself out the window, back onto the fire escape that had caught him. His dried blood blending in with the stair’s flaking paint. “You know,” the boy says, thinking back to Reo’s words earlier in the night, “You’re lucky I was the one you found.”

Tsukauchi grins. “You’re right. And, hey!” He calls before the boy can slip away, “Those stitches need to come out in two weeks, if you don’t have anyone to do it for you feel free to come back. If you try to do it yourself I *will* find out about it and track you down myself.”

Midoriya nods, smile blooming behind his mask. And, from there the vigilante disappears down the fire escape, dropping into the alley blow and traveling back to where he’d left his pipe, praying it’d still be there. He does find it, kicked to the side in his scuffle with the villain. The boy sighs, touching a hand to his injured side. Here he was, living his childhood fantasy. Perhaps, it was not in the way he had imagined, but he thinks the means he took to be here are justified by its outcome. He’s saving lives, and honestly that’s all that he can think of that matters. Above him the sky begins lightening, foretelling the coming of dawn.

Chapter End Notes

> Chapter four is up! I Hope everyone enjoyed! It's a few hours early because I doubt I'd be able to post it tomorrow. Thank you for all the feedback on the last chapter! <3

Gravitational Lens

Chapter Notes

> Instead of writing my essay I drew Reo, you can check it out here

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The police aren't credited for a lot of the things that they do. Even Midoriya, an avid hero news follower, had been clueless to this fact until taking up his title of vigilante.

More often than not it was the police that came to arrest the criminals he'd apprehended. And it was the police he had to watch out for more so than heroes while he was patrolling.

While the heroes had yet to discover his existence as a vigilante, he'd been gaining a steady reputation within the police department since his second week. Naomasa flips through the case file of the new vigilante. While it had been steadily gaining thickness, the vigilante's personal information hadn't gone past a general description. No known quirk, no clear pictures, and no name beyond his vigilante one 'Piper'. Red eyes, dark hair, short, but muscular. Dark clothes, face mask, and his trademark pipe. Naomasa sighes, pinching the bridge of his nose. Being a detective in the Quirk Crimes Division more often than not left numerous cases of vigilantism on his desk. Most of the time the situations were one off cases involving good samaritan complexes, but every once in a while a case like Piper's would show up. A person who, for whatever reason, decided to ignore the law and take matters into their own hands on a regular basis.

The man leans back in his seat, the chair creaking as he does so. "Sansa."

Tamakawa's ears twitch and he pauses mid coffee refill, head peeking around the breakroom wall. "Hmm?"

Tsukauchi rolls his head to look at the officer. "Is there anything new on the Piper case?"

The tabby pauses for a moment, thinking. "Actually, an officer called in another tied up criminal, it fits their m.o." Sansa walks back over towards his own desk, taking a sip of his coffee as he picks up one of the reports there. "It was a known Yakuza member, Ogami Tsukiru,

quirk: scissor hands." Sansa's whiskers twitch. "Someone zip tied him to the police car of an officer who was responding to a call near Toyomi Park." He catches the detectives dark eyes. "If it's him then this the first time he's delivered someone to us so directly, I'd bet that there's a bit of history there if you'd like to check it out."Another sip of coffee, a few drops clinging to the officer's fur. "He's in lock up waiting to be interrogated, no sign of a lawyer yet."

Tsukauchi pushes himself up with a grunt, accepting the file that Sansa hands him. "Let's go then. Have him brought into room three. Hopefully this is about Piper and we can get him to talk."

Ten minutes later Naomasa steps into the interrogation room, eyes skimming the man's paperwork. "My name is Detective Tsukauchi. I was hoping you'd be able to help us with something."

"I'm not saying shit."

The detective doesn't pause in his stride, instead settling down in the chair opposite the criminal. "Rest assured this has nothing with any crimes you may or may not have commited. I just want to know about the vigilante going by the name 'Piper'. He *was* the one who did this to you correct?" The criminal gives him a minute nod. "Then considering the way you were found an assumption is being made that there's a bit of history between the two of you. You were..." Naomasa flips through a few of the pages Sansa had handed him. "Hogtied? To the bumper?" The detective glances towards the one way mirror to his right, looking for confirmation, but only receives his reflection's confused face.

Behind the mirror Sansa's whiskers twitch with amusement.

He sighs, turning back towards the criminal. There's a long moment of silence before the man finally speaks. "It's not much of a history."

Tsukauchi sets the file to the side. "Anything helps."

Ogami frowns. "First off everything I did was in self defense. *He* attacked *me.* I don't kill kids and I don't like hurtin'em either, so I just cut him up a bit while we were fighting and ran the first chance I got."

His quirk doesn't register a lie so Naomasa remains silent, waiting for him to continue.

"I climbed up to the top of this building and jumped to over to

another roof to try and lose him but the lil shit followed me. I jump over, he jumps over. So, I jump to the *next* roof thinking he'll stop. I'm already halfway across the second roof when I hear this loud bang and when I turn around he's gone."

Naomasa's brow rises.

"A week later he tracks me down again complaining about falling off a roof and needing stitches." The man scowls. "And then I'm wakin' up tied to the front of a car. That's it."

Throughout the telling of the tale Tsukauchi's quirk never once registered a lie. But, despite all that the man has said of his adventures with the vigilante, Naomasa has to remember that there's a reason the man sits before him. He'd done something to be put on Piper's radar, and thus far they'd managed to successfully jail all but two of the people Piper had left for them. "So, you don't kill kids."

Tsukiru leans back as far back in his seat as his cuffs allow. "That's right."

"But you'll kill adults?" There's a moment of silence as the detective watches Ogami's eyes narrow.

"I don't kill people period."

Lie .

Naomasa lets out a deep sigh as he pushes himself up from his seat. "Rest assured we'll figure out who it was. Piper hasn't left us any innocent people thus far and I'm inclined to believe that you, Ogami-san, are no exception."

Tsukiru leans forward, fingers splayed across the metallic interrogation table. "You calling me a liar?"

"Unfortunately." With that the detective slips out of the room, followed shortly by Tamakawa.

"So, Piper's a kid?" Sansa asks, tailing the detective.

Naomasa falls into his desk chair, ten times more tired than when he'd gotten out of it. "Not necessarily. Ogami wasn't lying about not killing kids so at the very least it's possible he *believed* that Piper was one. I doubt that he'd have run otherwise unless he was actually worried about losing, but he seems too cocky for that. So, whether or not that's

actually the case, I'm not sure. For now we'll treat it as a possibility." He flips open Piper's casefile again. "From what Ogami said he got stitches from some injury. But, I'm afraid I blew it on getting any specifics, so that's probably a dead end unless we can get him to talk to us again. Though I doubt he'll want to speak without a lawyer anymore." The detective sighs, a mild headache starting to form behind his eyes. "Pass Ogami's case to Detective Soto. She's been trying to take down the remaining yakuza clans for years, so I'm sure she'd love to put him behind bars. And, try to see if there are any missing persons reports that fit Piper's description, child cases as well. There's a chance that he could be a runaway." Naomasa pauses, thinking. "Ignore anyone with flashy quirks for now. If no one's seen Piper use one yet then I think it's safe to say that his quirk either won't be a noticeable one or it won't be useful in combat. I'll keep an eye out for any civilian vigilante cases as well. Piper doesn't seem the type to let something go just because he's out of uniform." Naomasa turns to look at his friend. "Sorry, I know it's a lot to ask for. It's just…"

Sansa picks up for him, "If it really is a kid you want to find him as quickly as possible?"

Tsukauchi deflates a bit, dragging a hand through his hair. "Yeah."

"From here it's really just a game of chance," Sansa says, walking towards his own desk, "But, there are ways to increase our chances. Your plan is one of them. Don't stress too much Detective, if it's a kid we'll catch them soon enough. They're bound to slip up somewhere."

Two weeks after his initial encounter with his new level barrier Midoriya finds himself in a rather peculiar situation. He'd been lucky thus far, there weren't many heroes around so late into the night, so to begin with there was a small chance that he'd run into one unwillingly. Usually it was him tracking them down to enlist their help on the occasion that he found someone he couldn't protect by himself.

But, he'd never stopped to think during these last few months about the fact that these *heroes*, *who were certified by the law*, saw him as nothing more than another villain. He'd never stopped to think about what being a vigilante actually meant.

He'd been in the middle of subduing some mid tier drug dealer across from a slummy nightclub when there's a shout for him to stop from the mouth of the alley they're in. His head whips towards the sound, only able to take in a gaudy hero costume before he's forced to roll to the side to avoid a large hand reaching for him. There's barely enough room to do so in the alley and his head narrowly escapes a painful collision with a nearby dumpster.

Death Arms, Midoriya's mind supplies, pushing himself up, *Strength enhancement, usual hero hours, nine to five.*

To his left the drug dealer groans.

"Sir, are you okay?"

Izuku curses under his breath, the hero thought *he* was attacking civilians. He moves slowly, trying not to draw the man's eye as they helps the dealer sit up. Midoriya's pulse is racing, heart playing a staccato beat in his chest. He'd dealt with plenty of low level criminals, and recently more mid range ones as well, all of which had rather low level quirks. But, he'd never gone against someone with pro hero capabilities.

His pipe scrapes quietly across the concrete as he picks it up. The noise drawing the hero's eye, but by the time he can make to do anything to stop the boy, the end of his staff is slamming into the back of the drug dealer's head.

The vigilante physically flinches when it makes contact, but he knows that it has to be done. *If he's unconscious they'll escort him to the hospital. There he'll at least have a chance of being found with any incriminating evidence he has on him.* Midoriya leaps back, dodging a swing from the hero's fist. *If he's conscious they'd just him let go.*

His heart is in his throat.

I'm fighting a hero.

This isn't what he'd wanted when he decided to do what he does. *I didn't want to fight with heroes.*

"You knew it'd happen eventually," the voice in his head hisses,

"Heroes and vigilantes aren't friends."

Yeah, but that doesn't mean they have to be enemies.

Death Arms throws another punch at the boy, stepping in front of the drug dealer's unconscious body.

The vigilante throws himself back, dodging what he's sure would be a crippling blow when taking into account the man's quirk. He blinks and there's a strike of fear that races through him when the vision in one eye goes blurry. He curses, swiping at it. He feels something give way beneath his hand and roll down his cheek before he recovers just in time to dodge another blow.

"Make this easier on the two of us and turn yourself in peacefully!"

Midoriya throws up his guard, using his staff as a deterrent to keep the hero away if only for a moment. "What kind of cliche line is that? I hope you don't say that to all the criminals you try to take in! By the way! You do realize that *he's* the actual criminal here right? I wasn't the one selling drugs, that's all on him. I was just trying to stop him."

"That doesn't give ya' the right to keep whalin on 'em!" The hero shouts, slamming his fists together in what Midoriya assumes is supposed to be intimidating.

"What did you expect me to do? There wasn't anyone else who was gonna stop him. I'm a vigilante, this is my *job* ."

Death Arms scowls, his figure illuminated by the red neon lights of the club behind him. "No. Actually, it's my job."

The fifteen year old doesn't respond, instead making a dash for the opposite end of the alley. There's a grunt from behind him, and Izuku glances over to his shoulder to see the hero pick up one of the alley's dumpsters in a display of strength that Midoriya would normally stop to marvel at. But, in the position he's in now he only has enough time to drop his staff and get a running start at the wall, using it as leverage in a desperate attempt to reach the fire escape that he spies hanging just out of reach above him. His hands latch around the lowest rung on the ladder, but even up here he can't completely escape the dumpster's spiral through the small alley. One of the dumpster lids fly up in the mayhem, at such a velocity the usually harmless plastic is able to slice through the exposed skin of his lower back. The vigilante flinches at the sudden pain. But, he has to force himself to keep his grip on the ladder and finish hauling himself the rest of the way up as the dumpster lands in a deafening screech of metal against concrete.

The vigilante's heart pounds relentlessly in his chest and if he looks

down at this hands he's sure he'll find them shaking. His legs tremble. "You threw a dumpster at me?!" Midoriya yells, voice cracking ever so slightly. His hand goes to cradle the new wound on back, hissing when his fingers come back stained crimson.

"You resisted arrest!"

His gaze jerks away from his bloodied fingers and towards the hero below. His hands find a tight grip on the railing. "And, that gives you the right to try and *kill me?!* " Izuku had been scared at first, maybe even a little giddy somewhere in the middle of everything at seeing a pro up close. But, then he'd been terrified, his whole 'life flashing before your eyes moment' nothing more than a whelling of guilt and regret on behalf of his mother. But now, now that he's escaped immediate danger he feels tar-like rage bubbling up beneath his skin, clawing at his epidermis, howling to be let out, to be set free. "The hell kind of hero are you!" The tar spills from is mouth with absinthe words, and he can't even stand looking at the man as he slinks back to check on the downed drug dealer, keeping an eye on the boy's form all the while. Piper turns away, stomping up the steps of the fire escape towards the roof, each step sending out a resounding clang of metal. When he reaches the top, fire burning in his eyes, he leans over the edge and calls down to the hero out of nothing but pure spite. "Has anyone ever told you that your little *bracelets* are stupid and completely unnecessary?! Because they are! And they slow your shitty punches!"

The vigilante sulks on top of the roof for another fifteen minutes waiting for the hero disappear with the unconscious drug dealer. When he's sure the man is gone and he won't have to look at him again, he slinks back down the side of the building to retrieve his staff that Death Arms had simply *left* for Izuku to retrieve.

Midoriya walks out the opposite end of the alley, having to squeeze past the damaged dumpster, still muttering curses and one hand keeping pressure on the gash carved into his back.

It really is the last thing he wants to do at two in the morning when he's absolutely exhausted and still fuming at the hero. But, he know that the injury from the dumpster runs across an area on his lower back that he wouldn't be able to patch up on his own.

He worries for a moment that the Tsukauchi will have changed his

mind and refuse to help him anymore. Midoriya knows he doesn't have to worry about having the police called on him, the teen hadn't ratted him out last time and he's sure he wouldn't do so now either. But, helping again and playing snitch were two different things entirely. The vigilante taps quietly on the window, the light is still on.

He hears shuffling inside the room and there's a split second where the vigilante thinks of making a mad dash for it because ' *what in the actual hell am I doing'* . But, then the window is sliding open and Reo's head peeks out, amber eyes staring at him.

"Piper?"

Midoriya gives him a small wave and sheepish grin that's hidden behind his mask. "H-Hey Tsukauchi."

The teen scowls at him, the look startling the younger boy and he fears for a moment that his worry hadn't been misplaced.

"You're injured again aren't you."

The question surprises him, the vigilante only able to let out a strangled noise.

"When I told you to come back in a two weeks this is not what I meant."

Reo waves him in, Midoriya pausing only set his staff down outside and slip off his shoes.

"Didn't I tell you not to do anything until you healed?" Tsukauchi lays out an old towel on his swivel chair before motioning for the vigilante to sit. "And, unless you have some healing quirk I doubt your first injury has finished healing yet. *And* , if it *has* then taking out those stitches are going to be more painful than when I put them in. By the way," he says, catching the boy's eyes with his own, "What's up with the heterochromia? I didn't take you for such an edgelord."

The vigilante blinks at him, surprised. "What."

Reo pulls at the skin beneath his eye, "One's green."

Izuku's hand comes up to cover the left side of his face. "Mine?"

"Yeah."

Midoriya's eyes widen as he thinks back to his fight with Death Arms,

the moment his vision had gone blurry. He curses, rubbing at it. “This is what I get for buying cheap contacts.”

“So are they normally green?”

The fifteen year old nods silently, a little lost in his own head as he moves to straddle the seat the older boy offers to him.

“Anyway,” He starts again, changing topics, “I’m glad you came back.” Izuku looks over his shoulder at Reo in surprise as the boy pulls his hoodie up to reveal the new wound. It’s smaller than the first one, not as deep, but it’s jagged, not as cleanly cut as the last one. The teen continues speaking as he checks it, “I was worried you’d try to take out your stitches on your own.”

The vigilante feels a small welling of shame in his throat and he quickly looks away from the older boy.

Tsukauchi looks up, noticing the shifted mood. “Tell me you weren’t thinking about taking them out on your own. Tell me you didn’t take them out on your own.”

“I-I didn’t!” Midoriya stammers, clenching the hem of his hoodie in his hands. “I-I only thought about it!”

Tsukauchi lets out a sigh deep enough to rival that of a tired, old man as he pulls away from studying the new injury. “Well, the wound doesn’t look too bad. It’ll need stitches, but I think you’ll be pleased to hear that I found a less painful alternative.”

“Less painful gives me the distinct impression that there will still be pain involved.”

Reo grins at him. “You were out cold the last time I cleaned your wound, so yes, there will still be pain involved. But, stitches wise, no. I did some research online and found out that they have these things called butterfly stitches. They basically just tape your skin together, no needles needs.”

The vigilante lets out a relieved sigh as Tsukauchi cracks open the door to his room before disappearing into the darkness of his apartment, coming back a minute later with a first aid kit and a wet washcloth.

He spends a moment sifting through the items in the kit, pulling out the things he’ll need to clean the wound and setting them aside on his

nightstand. A comfortable silence falls over them, an experience that is entirely foreign to the fifteen year old with people other than his mother. It's a nice feeling, the teen is one of those people that it's easy to fall into conversation with despite whatever situation you find yourself in him with. He's easy to trust and Midoriya finds himself wondering if it could be a hidden second quirk he has from his mother's side.

Tsukauchi tucks himself into a cross legged position on the edge of his bed as he pulls the vigilante's seat closer. Reo grabs the washcloth and starts by gently wiping away the blood smeared around the wound.

"So, are you gonna tell me what happened?"

Midoriya grunts when the rag drags across the wound. "It was just this random drug dealer that I was taking care of, but then this hero shows up. Completely off his patrol route and *totally* off his usual hero hours. And, he just assumes that *I'm* the bad guy," Reo can hear the contempt that slips into the boy's voice as he speaks.

Tsukauchi sets the washcloth aside and pulls out a bottle of premade solution his mom had put together, pouring it over the wound. The vigilante immediately jerks away, cursing. "What the hell was that!"

Reo pulls the boy's chair back towards him from where he'd rolled away. "It's a mild saline solution."

"Salt?!"

Tsukauchi grins, shushing the vigilante with a laugh. "The data says that hydrogen peroxide isn't good on deep wounds, it isn't discriminatory on what kind of bacteria it kills. This will help clean everything and keep the good bacteria that'll help you heal. I also hear that it's rather painful, a good deterrent for getting yourself hurt again wouldn't you say? Now sit still."

The vigilante mutters a few more curses as the pain fades. "Anyway, this hero showed up ready to let the drug dealer go thinking he was some civilian. And, obviously I couldn't let that happen so I knocked him out."

Tsukauchi looks up, startled. "The hero?"

"No! The villain!" The vigilante lets out a quiet laugh as Reo spreads some antibiotics in and around the wound. "I figured he'd be taken to the hospital or something for treatment, maybe even the precinct to

take his statement. That way there was at least a chance of them finding whatever incrimiating stuff he had on him. But then the hero just! He just *yeets* a *dumpster* at me! I literally could've died!" He feels his previous fury boiling back up.

"Sue him."

Midoriya splutters, anger fizzling out in favor of surprise, "S-sue him?"

"Yes. Reckless endangerment, unnecessary force, lots of way you could win in court to be honest." With the vigilante's attention fully diverted the older boy finally pulls out the butterfly stitches, holding them out for the vigilante to look at. "Now. You see these beauties? They saved you from your nemesis Doctor Needle. Say thank you~"

A small, surprised laugh bubbles up through Midoriya's lips as he thanks the package that Reo's waving around before the boy rips it open and starts placing them over his wound. "Once I finish with this one I'll need to have a look at the wound on your ribs. How's it healing been healing up?" Reo allows only a moment of silence before he quickly starts speaking again. "You know what? Nevermind. I actually don't want to know what you've done to it against my suggestion. At this point I'd be surprised to find out that you haven't broken all of your stitches." Reo pulls out a guazepad and carefully sticks it over the wound. "All right, let's see rest of the damage then."

Midoriya is certain he'd ripped at least a few of the stitches out. He'd caught it bleeding one too many times after getting back from either patrols or the dojo over the last two weeks. The boy pulls his hoodie the rest of the way up, grimacing when Tsukauchi manages to get a look at.

"Where are the bandages?" Reo's eyes flicker up to meet the vigilante's red ones.

"We ran out?"

The wound itself is stained in an palette of angry monochromatic pink colors, and a few darker red pigments from some dried blood he hadn't had the time to clean off. It's puffy in the places where his stitches had come out. But, overall, the older boy thinks that it's not as bad as he'd expected it to be.

"Well, you managed to keep some of the stitches intact. And some of them at least had a chance to help you heal a bit before you popped them. It'll leave an ugly scar now though since you didn't take a break

to let it heal." Reo looks back up at the boy again, frown in place. "Did you even rest a full day before fighting again?"

Midoriya grimances, thinking back to how he'd trudged his way to the dojo not even twenty-four hours later, completely dead on his feet. Chee Sensei had been ready to send him home the moment he'd walked through the door. But, he'd convinced her otherwise, his mind too wrapped up in all of his mistakes the night before to miss any training.

"I'll take your silence as a no. I'm not going to take the stitches out yet. With the way you've been treating it, it wouldn't hurt to leave them in for several more days." The teen pulls out a few more butterfly stitches, placing them over the half healed injury. "I don't know if these will help or not, but they certainly won't hurt and they're easily replaceable." Tsukauchi slips a few extra into the younger boy's hoodie pocket. "Buy some more bandages and *keep the wound covered* you don't need it to get infected. You at least kept up with the antibiotics right?"

The vigilante nods, trying to peek at the wound.

"Good, and don't stop until it's fully healed, that goes for both of them." Reo finally lets the boy lower his hoodie. "That should do it then."

"Thank you," Midoriya says, "Again. I'd probably be dead or in jail at this point without you."

"Oh, dead most definitely. Probably from blood loss, or infection. Maybe even a dumpster," he says, grinning, "Who knows. Depends on how kind fate is to you."

The vigilante huffs a laugh, pushing himself up from his seat. "I don't think fate and I have ever been on good terms."

Reo hums, "Their loss, throw them in jail next time will you? I hear that's what Piper does to the criminals he crosses." The seventeen year old smirks, his remark drawing a smile from the other.

"Technically I already have, three weeks ago, just a few blocks from here. Some chick with a mood ring quirk, she was *literally* red in the face when I caught her trying to rob an atm." Midoriya slips back out the window, picking up his shoes from where he'd left them on the landing.

There's a moment of silence as Midoriya undoes his laces. "You know," the older boy starts, leaning on the windowsill. "You don't have to be injured just to drop by." The vigilante pauses in pulling on his shoes, turning to look at the older teen. "Maybe it's strange for me to say. But, you're surprisingly easy to talk to and we get along well. So, I wouldn't be opposed to getting to know you outside of your whole vigilante persona." Reo says, elbows coming to rest on the window's ledge, hands propping up his chin. "Oddly enough I trust you, and considering that you're even back here at all says that it's the same for you."

There's a strange welling in the vigilante's chest. "I—I think I'd like that. It'd be nice to have a friend like you for once." *It'd be nice to have a friend at all* .

"What'll he do once he finds out you're quirkless?" Again the sickening voice prys open it's maw, words like molten tar sticking to the insides of his skull. *"He'll abandon you for sure."*

Tsukauchi smiles. "I guess I'm not allowed to run around saying I'm friends with Piper now?"

Midoriya laughs, burying the voice as he pulls his shoes on the rest of the way, lacing them back up. "Not unless you're looking to get us both arrested. I can see it already. I come back to you complaining about some injury or the other, bleeding all over the place and when I get here an officer lets me in. Like, "Okay I get it, you're arresting me, but my *lung*, it's *punctured*, *I need him to fix it.*""

Reo lets out a quiet wheeze of laughter. *"Please* , whatever you do don't come to me with a punctured lung I *will* call an ambulance."

The vigilante picks up his staff, standing up again. "Your option on punctured lungs has been noted. Now, can I ask about broken limbs?"

Reo swats at him from the window, missing the boy's pant legs by a few centimeters. "At this point you just need to have a line up of excuses ready for when you're forced to go to the hospital. Or, a butt load of cash to pay people off."

Midoriya snaps his fingers, shaking one at the seventeen year old. “That’s not a bad idea actually. Drug dealers carry way too much cash on them, and as long as it doesn’t hinder the investigation.” The boy shrugs before grinning. “I could always pay you for your medical services as well.”

The older teen wears a matching grin. “I like where this is going. That could help fund some of my bigger projects.”

Izuku’s brow rises. “Projects?”

“What? You think those desks in there are just for show? I’m in the support course at the school I go to you know.”

Midoriya’s christmas colored eyes widen. “As in hero gear support course?”

“As in hero gear support course.” Reo’s grin widens. “Maybe this can be our always.”

“I’m trying to be home before three,” the vigilante states, “but if you think the next time I come over I *won’t* ask about every single one of your projects you are absolutely *wrong* .”

The older teen can only smile. “I’ll be looking forward to it Piper.”

_____

Vigilante Piper takes down Villain!! Hero stops him!!!

1,621,318 views

3,012 comments

the-database-says-ur-stupid - 7 hours ago

This is literally the most unconventional version of Pied Piper I’ve seen in my life and that’s saying a lot after that disaster of a DC movie remake three years ago.

|trash| - 10 hours ago

HOLY SHIT HOW IS HE EVEN ALIVE????

plutoisgay - 6 hours ago

I can't believe that hero thought Piper was the villain

That other dude looks so obviously shady

pear_on_a_boat - 3 hours ago

3:12 DID Y'ALL SEE HIS EYES IMDAKJFL SJKF

stanmirk0 - 7 hours ago

You KNOW Death Arms is gonna get SO much shit for this

dablzawa - 5 hours ago

I wonder if those eye colors are real 0-0

moonwavez - 2 hours ago

lmao at 2:23 did you guys see the face that hero made Sksksksk

Did anyone see if Piper used a quirk?? I've been trying to figure it out, but there's not a lot of info on them yet and the video doesn't give it away.

Chapter End Notes

> Also! Just another quick drawing I did. Unlike Reo, I just finished this one today so please enjoy it!
>
> Thank you all for the feedback on these last few chapters, I've been really blown away by it! I hope you all enjoyed the update and I'll see you all next week!

Retrograde

Chapter Notes

> Just a little piece about Naomasa and Sansa seeing that video~
> "Detective you've gotta see this," Sansa jogs towards the man's desk, bell jingling and a phone held in his outstretched hand. Naomasa takes it from him, tapping on the video he points to. "It's Piper. He came into contact with a pro hero by the name of Death Arms sometime late Wednesday night. He managed to escape, but someone recorded most of it. A lot of people have seen the video already and the hero is evidently under a lot of pressure from the media to make a statement." The officer seems a bit frazzled and as the video goes on Tsukauchi can see why. Naomasa's eyes widen as the video cuts out abruptly with the crashing of metal. The detective can't tear his eyes from the screen, stunned. "He threw a dumpster at him?"
>
> ~And now back to our regularly scheduled programming~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The name Piper had been floating around the underground for a while now. And, he can only assume that the recently acquired 'Pied' portion had originated from the video of him that had been circulating. He'd lost a red contact during his fight against Death Arms and his Christmas colored eyes had been visible on camera when he'd turned to run from his impending doom. Right towards the bystander that'd been filming him.

Midoriya passes Reo the phone, watching as he starts the video over. "I mean I get the name," the vigilante says, stepping back to sit on the teens bed, "Pied, multicolored, I get it but like *why* ? I didn't think the internet was coherent enough to come up with something like that."

Tsukauchi sets the phone aside halfway through, he'd already watched it several times before the vigilante had arrived. He gives the younger boy a sly grin. "I may have mentioned on more than a few online forums that your name already kind of resembled a certain comic book character. People seemed to agree."

Midoriya freezes, mouth falling open just the tiniest bit. "You…"

"It has a rather unexpected effect as well since the name kind of draws

everyone to make their own conclusions about what your quirk is. There's not much footage of you and most online testimonials can't be proven. So, there's not really any information to dispute them," Reo says before shrugging, "I saw a post yesterday that was starting to go around claiming that you can control rats. It's a rather entertaining side effect if I'm being honest." Tsukauchi's lips quirk up in a smile.

It's nearly three am and the vigilante is borderline exhausted. But, when he thinks about the true origin of his name and the pipe he'd left sitting on the fire escape outside he can't help but break into laughter, muffling the sound with his elbow. "It's been *two weeks* Tsukauchi," Midoriya laughs, " *What have you begun* ."

Reo huffs a laugh of his own, eyes crinkling at the corners. "You'd be surprised at my online influence."

The fifteen year old falls back into the bed, staring at the ceiling as they fall into a comfortable silence and Tsukauchi goes back to working on a voice modulator he'd started on for class. It's a peaceful moment, the two sharing the same space, the same air, with no need for forced communication or small talk. The clinking of metal fills the silence and the thoughts in Reo's head swirl.

Piper had come limping back into his room less than thirty minutes ago. No serious injuries this time, but he'd had a few bruises to add to his collection. The seventeen year old tries to shut down the train of thought he'd being dragged into, tries to pull the emergency brake. But, the thoughts surge forward like a flood, filling him questions.

He reaches a hand up, grasping for the surface, but he only takes hold of more water, more questions. Here, beneath the flood waters, his lungs burn, begging for air, for answers.

"Piper." Tsukauchi sets down the piece he's working on, slowly turning around. His voice takes on a tone that's almost strangled, as if he's trying to hold himself back in a way that Midoriya had never been privy to. "Why'd you decide to become a vigilante?"

Midoriya freezes, caught off guard. Reo doesn't say anything more. He doesn't push for answers or demand anything from the boy. Izuku should have expected it really. Then again maybe he had and he'd simply been denying the inevitable. The seventeen year old had stitched up the vigilante numerous times by now. He deserved to know why Piper existed, deserved to know why he went out piling up wounds like he did. Tsukauchi deserved to know the meaning behind

the injuries he treated.

Midoriya slowly sits up, head bowing over his knees, studying the lines of his hands. “It’s… It’s the only way I can save people,” Izuku answers quietly before realizing his mistake, quickly backtracking, “I-I mean obviously there are other professions that allow you to save people. But, to be able to *save people, save people* ,” his voice gets quiet again, “This is the only way.”

In his mind the caustic voice returns, dripping absinthe words that the fifteen year old tries desperately to drown out.

Tsukauchi doesn’t say anything, letting the boy collect himself.

“I tried the legal way,” he says, swallowing around the lump in his throat. “Tried applying for a hero course, but they,” he trails off, bile rising, “I’m quirkless.” His eyes *burn* , and it takes all the fifteen year old has not to let tears start slipping down his face.

He waits for the backlash, for the “are you insane?!”, for the “if I’d have known I wouldn’t have…”, for the “ *the dangers of hero work are simply too high* ”. But, none of them come, nothing comes. Midoriya looks up, searching for a response from the older teen, searching for the look of disgust or disappointment.

But, there’s nothing, no hate, no pity, no alarm. The boy’s amber eyes are calm, boring into the vigilantes own cocktail of red and green, soothing him.

“I really should have seen that coming.” The words are so easily said without malice or revulsion or distaste that it surprises the fifteen year old. It’s said in such a matter of fact way, and it’s something that’s so very Reo-like of the teen to respond with that Midoriya can’t help the laughter that bubbles up.

“That’s it?”

“That’s it.” There’s a soft smile that comes with the words. “It’s kind of badass to be honest.”

If the older boy notices when Midoriya swipes at the few tears that slip out he doesn’t say anything. Izuku mumbles a thank you and the two spend the next half hour watching hero videos at Reo’s suggestion.

The next night, before Midoriya has even had time to catch any criminals, the vigilante finds himself staring down over a small squadron of flashing police cruisers. His heart pounds in his chest and the light from that mini sun burns bright between his ribs, making him giddy through the terror that's threatening to overrun him.

There's an unconscious C rank hero three stories below him being tended to in the ambulance that'd arrived. And, he knows it's a serious situation that he's in, the building he's on is surrounded by police and he'd knocked a *hero* unconscious. But, he can't help how his hand rises in greeting.

Beneath the vigilante Tamakawa and Tsukauchi watch from the street. "He certainly acts like a kid," Sansa says, looking up as Piper waves at the three police cars below.

Naomasa pinches the bridge of his nose in an attempt to ward off his oncoming headache. "Yes he does. It's not a great circumstance, I'm sure he'll end up getting away since we don't have enough people here. But, at the very least I'm not as worried about some revenge seeker catching him before us. He's good for his age."

Sansa's brow rises. "So, you think Piper's a kid after all?"

Tsukauchi shrugs. "I'd say a teenager at the very least, maybe sixteen? Seventeen? At that age it's possible that they could be feeling pressured to do something with their life. I know teachers can stress students for their career paths, especially with only a few months till the end of the semester. The timing lines up for it, at least."

"He'll have to have learned to fight somewhere," the feline says, replaying the events in his head. "Maybe a hero school?" Sansa asks.

Naomasa shakes his head, squinting through the flashing police lights to see Piper's dark silhouette. "I doubt he'd be doing this if he was good enough to get into a hero school. Seeing him fight up close it looked more like some kind of martial art. Have someone start looking into some of the local dojos, it might help us catch a lead. Have them make visits if necessary, I'll help out with it when I can."

"Yes sir."

Piper gives one final wave to the officers below before disappearing.

"Follow him!" Naomasa shouts, watching him disappear. "Have a few cars patrol the area! And notify the local hero agencies to be on the

lookout for Piper!”

Tsukauchi sighs, watching the remaining officers scramble to follow his orders as his mouth stretches into a yawn.

Sansa side eyes the man. “Will you be able to make it back to your place?”

“No need to,” the detective replies, watching one of the patrol cars pull away. “I’m staying at Misaki’s tonight. She’s out on a business trip and doesn’t want to leave my nephew home alone. She said he’ll stay up till five if I don’t stop him.”

Sansa’s whiskers twitch in amusement. “Sounds like someone else I know.”

Tsukauchi sends him a playful glare.

“Have fun Detective,” Sansa says, bemused.

A smirk pulls at Naomasa’s lips and he hums in response. “You too Sansa, and sorry for keeping you out so late.”

The feline waves him off. “Not your fault.”

Midoriya scales the fire escape, rushing up the stairs as quietly as he can. It’s now 1 am and he knows he should feel tired, but adrenaline is still rushing through him like lightning and he feels too giddy to sleep. He can see Reo’s bedroom light still on and he breaks into a grin, picking up his pace. Midoriya rips his face mask and shoes off and sets his staff and sneakers down on the landing before going to tap on the boy’s window.

Reo’s sitting at one of his workshop tables studying a blueprint when he looks over, surprised. He’s up and opening the window within seconds, letting the boy in.

“Piper? You’re here kind of early.”

Midoriya crawls through the opening, pulling his hood back as he goes. “Tsukauchi! You’ll never believe what just happened, I’m shaking.” Midoriya straightens himself and whips up his hands up to show the boy the gentle tremble of his fingers. “The cops had me

cornered! I was in this parking lot behind Denny's and I wasn't even doing anything! But, they recognized me! And then there were all these cops that showed up. And, and, they called in this hero that had this quirk! And, I can't remember his name, but I know him! He knows martial arts! And he dual wielded bastons! An—"

Reo claps his hands down on the younger boy's shoulders with a laugh. "Slow down there speedster, I lost you at 'the cops cornered me'."

Izuku takes in a deep breath, trying to steady his heart rate. "I got away." There's a grin that blooms across his face. "I got away." The boy is basically vibrating in place. "How the hell did I get away?!"

"And, you came all this way just to tell me this."

"I was close by and knowing you I figured you'd still be awake working on something." Midoriya makes his way towards the forgotten blueprints, still giddy but very obviously trying to calm himself down. "What are you working on?"

Reo laughs, accepting the change in subject. "After yesterday I took the liberty to come up with a few ideas for some gear you could use. I figured they might help you at some point." Midoriya opens his mouth to respond, but is quickly stopped when Reo raises a hand. "Before you say anything, I wanna tell you this. In about five minute you'll probably come to the sudden realization that me doing this for you would make me your accomplice, which is, as you know, illegal. So, I'm gonna go ahead and say this. I understand what I'm getting myself into and I want you to know that I believe you won't rat me out or anything if you get caught. As strange as it is, I trust you Piper."

The stars in Izuku's eyes flare to life, and while they radiate only a fraction of the light that burns in his chest, it's enough to convey to Reo what this means to him. "Midoriya," the boys says, chest welling with an indescribable emotion, "My name's Midoriya."

Reo can only grin as he pulls a few blueprints from a stack on his desk. "Alright then Midoriya, what do you say about these? I was thinking you could use more than just a staff and since you're obviously running from heroes and stuff a lot now I figured some sort of smoke bombs would be a necessity…"

Naomasa lets out a tired sigh as he steps out of the apartment complex's elevator, dragging a spare key from his pocket. All the lights are off when he unlocks the door save the thin stream seeping out from his nephew's room.

The man slips off his shoes and coat, setting them on the entry bench. "Reo! It may be the weekend, but 2am is pushing it!"

There's a loud clatter from the room like something falling and a muffled yelp that sounds distinctly unlike Reo. Naomasa frowns, walking towards the door. Just before he manages to get there there's a thump and Reo rips open the door, socked feet scrambling for purchase on the wooden floors. "Oji-san! You scared me! Mom didn't say you were coming!" The boy's voice is a higher decimal than usual and sweat beads at his brow.

Naomasa stares the boy down, he's obviously disheveled, worried about the man finding something. "Reo. Is there a girl over?"

The teen's eyes get comically wide. "Absolutely not!"

Truth.

Reo recognizes the approaching danger and starts speaking again before the man can ask another question, "I was just talking to a friend about some new projects!"

"Are they here?"

Reo eye's zip to something in his room before bouncing back again. "No?" The word sounds more like a question than an answer.

Truth.

The man's brow rises, too tired to properly berate the boy. "Did they just slip out the window?"

Reo's teeth dig into his lower lip. "I'd prefer not to answer that."

The detective huffs out a tired sigh before turning away. "If they're not staying the night make sure they get home safe Reo."

Tsukauchi deflates, letting out a relieved sigh. "Yes sir."

Midoriya curses, scrambling down the fire escape, shoes in one hand

and staff in the other. He pauses at the bottom, listening for commotion above as he attempts to calm his erratic breathing. He doesn't hear anything at first, but eventually there's a call from above.

"Pi-Midoriya! You still there?" Reo leans his head out the window, whisper shouting for the fifteen year old as he looks for movement below.

"Yes!" The vigilante calls back up with the same sort of whispered shout.

"I've gotta go! Be safe, okay?"

Midoriya slips back up one of the flights of stairs. "Safe is my middle name!"

"No. No, absolutely not. Your middle name is target practice and you have an 'aim here' sign adhered to your chest." Izuku lets out a quiet laugh as he sits down to finally pull on his shoes. "You're going home, right?"

"Not yet, its Saturday so I was thinking of saying out a bit longer. I didn't get much done earlier and I've been trying to track down this one group of teens for like a week. I'm hoping that I'll finally manage to catch a break since it's the weekend." The vigilante finishes knotting his laces, picking his staff back up as he stands. "I'll see you later. I'm excited to see how far you get with those smoke grenades you mentioned!" With that he disappears back into the night from which he came.

There's a twenty-four hour convenience store nearby that Midoriya visits on the occasions he starts craving something or the other mid patrol. And, he'd heard a few rumors from the cashier that he's acquainted with that there'd recently been an outbreak of shoplifting cases in the area.

All of the rumors he'd been privy to thus far led him back to the one group that he was now tailing. He watches the five teens stride down a dead end alley before following them, cutting off their only path out.

"I thought you said this was a shortcut Airi?" The only other girl says. Her hair is a neon blue, possibly quirk related considering the dim glow it gives off.

“S-sorry must be the next one down,” there’s a strained laugh that follows the response. Midoriya pauses, surprised by the familiarity that comes with the voice.

One of the guys, a boy with two small horns, turns around first, bright yellow eyes burning through the dark. The vigilante can’t tell if either attribute are quirk related, but staring into his eyes causes the vigilante’s stomach to twist uncomfortably. The teen startles upon seeing the darkly clad figure, his form appearing as a mere silhouette in backlighting of the streetlamp behind the fifteen year old. The others turn with him. “Who the hell are you supposed to be?”

Midoriya brushes aside the words. “I thought you were supposed to have learned by now not to take stuff that doesn’t belong to you?”

The teens tense, immediately on the defensive. “What was that, asshole?” The blue haired girl calls, scowl illuminated by the glow of her hair, he sees it sparkle with a minute amount of electricity and reminds himself to be wary.

“Now, there are two ways we can go about doing this.” Piper feigns more confidence that he feels, banging one end of his staff on the concrete, the sound startling the teens as he casually leans against it. “The way where I call the police and you wait patiently for them to sort everything out, or,” he says, drawing out the word, “The way where I call the police and *make* you wait patiently for them to sort everything out.”

In the dim light of the alley the vigilante has the advantage of having the light to his back. And, it’s because of this that when he looks over the shoulder of the yellow eyed boy he pauses at a startling familiar face, two startling familiar faces. Two that he prays he isn’t actually seeing, two that he prays are just a trick of the light or his mind or anything other than the cruel hand of fate.

But, fate had never been so kind as to make anything in his life so simple. The first face belongs to one Tanaka Hato. He hadn’t seen the boy in literal years, not since Chee Sensei had kicked him from the dojo. But, it’d be hard to forget his face and the wicked glint of promised violence hidden in his eyes once he’s seen the potential for a fight. There’d been rumors of course, of what happened to him after he’d left. Two kids from their class had said they’d spotted him viciously working the competition circuits under a different dojo, another said he’d moved schools and become the head of some delinquent gang. And, seeing him now, Izuku can see that both of the

rumors might have had some truth buried there.

Because of this Midoriya wasn't too surprised at seeing *him* there, he was more surprised to see the girl standing just behind him.

He hadn't seen her over a year and her name hadn't come up in almost as long. But, he wouldn't be able to forget the face of the girl he'd trained with and fought against for five years. Hirano Airi, now sixteen years old, the winner of multiple Muay Thai awards and competitions, had fallen into delinquency. The vigilante knew that a lot could happen within a year, just looking at himself was proof enough of that. But, to see her now, so far removed from the girl he'd known at their dojo, startled him to say the least.

She seemed out of place within the group and he realizes now that she was the owner of the voice he'd recognized earlier.

"What makes you think you can *make* us do anything?" The yellow eyed teen wraps an arm around the back of Tanaka's neck, drawing him closer with a grin. "I'll have you know this guy right here is a master at karate."

There's a scowl that comes upon Tanaka's face with the word 'karate', but it's quickly replaced for a cheshire grin similar to the other boy's.

"Don't forget about our girl Airi," the other girl says, stepping forward with Hirano in tow. "I heard she can kick some ass too."

The sixteen year old looks completely uncomfortable, shying away from the spotlight they'd shoved on her. "I really don't fight… anymore…" Midoriya feels a surge of sympathy from the girl when her 'friend' sends her this disgusted 'what the hell is wrong with you?' look.

"I'd hate to fight a bunch of kids anyway," he replies, heterochromatic gaze turning to scan the others.

The last teen, a tall, lanky guy with black hair and no noticeable quirk, speaks up from the back, "Says the shortest one here." He flashes a smug grin at the vigilante and in the dim lighting Midoriya can see the glint of shark-like teeth in his mouth. "My quirk lets me *smell* emotions," he hisses, "And you *reek* of fear and false confidence."

"Tell 'em Shimaru!"

Piper doesn't let the words faze him, *can't* let them faze him, he knows

he's scared, knows that his vigilante persona oozes confidence that he doesn't have during the day. So, instead he uses the words to his advantage. " *He's probably a type of empath then, non offensive, but watch out for his teeth. The girl has some type of electrical quirk, so I'll need to be wary of getting too close. I shouldn't have to worry about Tanaka's quirk, more his physical abilities, and I doubt that Hirano will even try to fight unless I attack her first.* " His eyes dart back towards the front man. And, when he catches the teen's gaze, he feels his stomach twist again, a sudden irrational fear coiling his stomach in knots. " *Emotion manipulation?* " Midoriya swallows around his gradually growing fear. " *Possibly an emotional amplifier.* " The boy rips his gaze away, zipping back to the other four. " *Eye contact activation.* "

He doesn't get much more time to think before Tanaka is charging at him. Fighting the boy is just as the vigilante rememberers. His kicks and punches are just as vicious as they had been five years ago, and the smile he wears is still just as devilish in nature. But, as their fight drags on Tanaka's grin slowly dissolves into a grimace when he sees how the vigilante is able to keep up with him, blocking his attacks with ease.

"Hato! Quit playing around! We've got places to be!"

"I'm not playing Osakue!" Tanaka grunts, blocking the swing of the vigilante's pipe. It's only for a split second, but Tanaka's gaze leaves his opponent to glare at yellow-eyed teen.

Midoriya grins, watching the moment the boy drops his guard to look away. "You shouldn't let something as simple as words distract you!" Piper shouts as he slams his staff into the older boy's side.

There's a grunt of pain from his opponent.

Tanaka is no amateur, Midoriya knows this, but he isn't expecting for the boy to clamp his arm around the end of his staff. The older boy looks up, grinning. "I was hoping you'd fall for that." From the corner of the vigilante's vision he sees Osakue, the yellow-eyed teen, rushing towards him. He tries yanking the pipe back towards him to block the incoming blow, but Tanaka is strong and his grip doesn't waver so the teen's fist slams into Midoriya's face. The blow sends stars across his vision and he stumbles to the side, momentarily stunned.

Tanaka tosses the pipe far from them, sending up a loud clanging of metal on concrete.

Piper rubs gently at his cheek, worried about how it'd bruise. He

slowly turns his head to look at the yellow eyed teen. “What the hell am I gonna do if this bruises?” He can taste copper and swipes his tongue along his teeth to check them.

“Sounds like a *you* problem,” the boy sneers.

The vigilante scowls, falling back into a basic defensive stance, pied eyes zipping between the two, watching to see who would move next. He needs to finish this quickly.

Osakue raises his fists and the vigilante recognizes the stance as that of a boxer, but it’s off in a way that tells Midoriya that it was learned through imitation rather than instruction.

The yellow eyed teen makes to throw another punch, but it’s sloppy and Midoriya is able to easily catch it. He uses the boy’s own momentum and sends him slamming into the wall.

Tanaka attacks then, kick flying from his blind spot towards the vigilante’s ribs. It sends spikes of pain through his side and some of the breath from his lungs, but it’s the opening the vigilante needed. He locks down his arm around Tanaka’s ankle, grinning behind his mask with bloodied teeth. “I was hoping you’d fall for that.”

Hato curses, trying to wrench his foot free. But, before he can Midoriya sends his own kick to the back of the teens free leg, watching it buckle. He uses the opportunity it offers him to slam Tanaka stomachs first into the concrete. He lets out a grunt of pain as Piper digs his knee into his lower spine and locks the older boy’s arm behind his back.

“Stay down,” the vigilante murmurs.

Tanaka used his freehand to take an awkward swing at the fifteen year old. “Like Hell asshole!”

Midoriya takes a stronger hold of the boy’s arm and wrenches up, Tanaka letting out a gut wrenching cry as the vigilante drops his hold. Springing to his feet to round on the blue haired girl he catches running in the corner of his vision. “I said stay down!” He shouts at the boy beneath him as she skids to a halt, the fight draining from her eyes as she takes a step back.

“Shit! Hato!” Osakue calls as he pushes himself up from where he’d fallen, “You better get your ass up!” Izuku can see blood on him, trickling from the scrapes on his hands and knees and from one just

above his brow.

But, Tanaka only groans, rolling over still holding his shoulder.

“It’s only dislocated,” the vigilante informs them as he eyes the other four for movement. “Take that as a warning.”

Osakue scoffs, “You think I’d be scared just because you popped someone *else’s* shoulder out of place?” But, Midoriya can see the fear in his yellow eyes, and when Izuku glances at the shark-toothed teen stationed behind him the vigilante can tell that for all the confidence Osakue puts up he’s scared.

Piper grins beneath his mask. “It seems I’m not the only one who reeks of fear and false confidence.” They meet eyes and there’s another swell of fear within the vigilante, but he swallows it, reminding himself that this wasn’t what real fear was.

Midoriya had felt *real* fear. And, *this* was not it.

Osakue scowls and the Shimaru boy warily glances between the two of them. The teen’s face flushes red with anger and he doesn’t say anything before charging with another imitation boxer swing. But, Piper doesn’t block it this time, instead sending a kick to Osakue’s head.

He crumples under the blow, unconscious, and it goes by quickly after that. The blue-haired girl tries charging him again but it only takes a simple arm lock for her to surrender and Shimaru gives up without a struggle after the display. Letting the vigilante calmly zip tie his hands to a bike rack he’d cuffed the blue-haired girl to.

“Fear can be a good thing,” Midoriya says as he stands up, wiping off his hands. “It means your cautious, and it keeps you on your toes as long as you don’t let it control you.” He locks eyes with the shark-toothed boy. “Never underestimate someone who’s scared.”

The vigilante turns then, not waiting for a response as he ducks back into the alley to help Tanaka stand. He scowls, but doesn’t put up any fight when Midoriya pulls him up and walks him out of the alley to zip ties his good arm to the bike rack next to Shimaru.

Hirano is the last conscious one still free, he’d been saving that encounter for later. But, now that she was the last one standing he couldn’t put it off any more. She’d been slowly making her way towards the front of the alley since the vigilante had helped Tanaka

up.

He approaches her now and sees tears swell in her eyes. She's not making a move to try and escape and Midoriya feels a surge of pity well up within him at the fact. The last thing he wants to do was zip tie the girl to a street sign until the police arrived. But, he can't afford to hint at his connection with her. So, he quietly guides the sniveling sixteen year old towards a spot on the sidewalk and binds her hands to a street sign in the most comfortable position he can think of.

She's far enough from everyone else that no one would be able to tell if he spoke. So, when he gently works the zip ties around her wrists, he speaks to her in a quiet voice. He tries to hold back at first, but seeing the unshed tears glinting on her eyes does nothing but further stoke his curiosity. "Why are you with them?"

She looks up at him, started. "W-what?"

"Why are you with them?" He says, repeating himself, "You don't seem the type to hang around with delinquents."

"I…" She swallows around the lump in her throat," I trained with one of them for awhile at a dojo we use to go to…. We just happened to end up at the same high school, and I… well I didn't know anyone else…" She looks down, studying the cracks in the sidewalk.

The vigilante sighs, "If you want my advice, then I'd suggest finding new friends. It's not always an easy task, but it's better than finding yourself in another situation like this right?" A part of his heart aches to see Hirano like this, she'd always thrived underneath the dojo's roof, but here she looked part cadaver, completely drained of the shine she once held. "If they try to give you trouble for leaving then turn to someone who will help you get out and if there's no one to help you get out then you know how to fight back if they try anything. Right?" She nods, a few tears falling onto the pavement. "You'll be fine. When the police get here just tell them the truth. They'll believe you. I promise." He finishes with the zip ties and pushes himself back up, distancing himself from her.

"Damn it! Let us go asshole!" The blue-haired girl shouts from where he'd tied her.

"I'm afraid the name's Piper, not asshole," Midoriya lets out a tired sigh.

"I don't care who the hell you are! We weren't doing anything

wrong!”

The vigilante swipes at the sweat on his forehead, turning towards the teen. “Attempted assault, assault, illegal quirk usage and, oh!” He exclaims turning towards the girl, “I’ve been hearing rumors about a group of kids running around the area, shoplifting from a bunch of stores. They’ve all been noticing a suspicious occurrence with their surveillance equipment just before a few things disappear without a trace. The work of a quirk I’d assume.”

“And what does that have to do with us?!” Tanaka calls from beside the girl.

“Obviously because it was you guys who set up this whole ‘traveling magic show’,” The vigilante sneers. There’s a bitter taste in the back of this throat when he sees Hirano’s down trodden face from the corner of his eyes. “I assume it’s the work of the electrical quirk among you,” he says eyeing the girl’s sparking, blue hair. “I’ll let the police figure out the details for themselves. Whoever it is will probably end up taking a majority of the fall, unlicensed quirk usage and all that, a bona fide villain for sure. So the rest of you shouldn’t worry too much.” The boy walks back into the alley, slipping a phone off of Osakue and pulling up the emergency tab on the lock screen and dialing 110.

He can see the blue-haired start fidgeting as he presses the phone to his ear. He smirks at the nervous look she’s donned since his little ‘villain spiel’. “Hi there! Piper here. I’ve got a group of five teens sitting outside the Onodera bathhouse, Igusa district, block 26, building 16. There’s been a string of shoplifting cases in the area involving the use of an electrical quirk. I believe they’re in possession of several stolen items at the moment, so I think you’ll find that they’re the ones behind it.” Midoriya glances back over at the kids. “You’ll need at least 3 patrol cars, maybe one of those police vans I see from time to time. Your precinct has a van right? Either way they’ll be here waiting. One is unconscious and four are tied up. One also has a dislocated shoulder so I’d dispatch an ambulance or two as well. Thanks!”

The vigilante picks up his staff and retreats to a nearby rooftop, watching the five to make sure there are no successful escape attempts before the police arrive. In the distance he can see police lights flashing and sirens wailing.

Chapter End Notes

!!!!!!! Now you know why Reo and Naomasa have the same name I've had this chapter written for awhile, but I saw someone comment about Reo being his nephew on the last chapter and just immediately burst into laughter and showed it to my friend who pre reads everything for me and we laughed about it together LMAO

Anyways that's another week gone by! Thank you to everyone for reading and to everyone who has been commenting I just wanted to let you know that it always makes me really happy to read them, like stupidly happy, like I already constantly radiat Big Dumb Energy but it just gets 100 times worse and my chaos levels reach peak velocity.

Love you all and I'll see you guys again next week unless you follow my twitter and then you have to put up with my bs 24/7 and I'm not sorry for it

Accretion Disk

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“So, Tanaka Hato was the one who initiated the fight? And Piper only told you all to wait for police to arrive.” In front of the detective Hirano nods, confirming the statement. “And you didn’t see him use any kind of quirk during the fight?”

She shakes her head. “No sir.”

Naomasa sighs, *another dead end then.* He begins pushing himself up to leave. “Well, if there’s anything else you remember please feel free to contact us.”

“Actually, um….” The girl trails off, looking nervous. The detective stops, lowering himself back into his seat. “No, nevermind I-”

The detective eyes her quizitively.

“It’s just… They… I don’t want them to…” She frowns, playing with her hands.

“Hirano-san,” Naomasa says quietly, debating how to continue forward. *I need her to trust me.* “We suspect that Piper is a kid your age.”

The teen looks up, startled by the revelation.

“What he’s doing,” Naomasa continues on carefully, “It’s dangerous. He’s helped put a lot of bad people behind bars, but doing so comes at a big risk for anyone. It gives him a lot of enemies… Hirano-san…” he ventures, “I’m honestly *thankful* that Piper is helping us put away the people that need to be, but… I’m more worried about his safety than anything else. If there is *anything* that you can tell me that could help us prevent anything from happening to him, then I need to know.”

The girl bites her lip. “I… I don’t know if it’ll help or not, but….” She pauses, *this is to help him.* “He was…. He was using this type of martial art called Muay Thai…. It’s, um… this specific type of martial arts, it’s not seen much outside of Thailand anymore. Tanaka and I used to be enrolled in a dojo that taught it, that’s the only reason I recognized it,” she explains.

Tsukauchi's thoughts race to connect the red strings strung across his mind. "How many places do you think still teach it in Japan?"

Hirano looks up, surprised by the question. "Um…. I'm not too sure. Regional competitions were always rather small though seeing as there's only a handful of dojos in the area. But, Nationals were always a decent size, you'd get people from all across Japan there."

"So it's a pretty tight knit community then?"

"Well… I wouldn't necessarily say tight knit," the sixteen year old mumbles, "It's not like everyone knew everyone. But, you knew who your competition was. Tanaka has actually been to nationals a few times and… since Piper was able to beat him like he did then you're at least looking for someone who's good enough to make it there as well."

The two talk for a moment longer before the detective pushes himself up, gathering his things. "Thank you very much for this information Hirano-san. We'll make sure to put it to good use. If you remember *anything* else please feel free to give me a call." He slides a business card across the interrogation table to the teenager. "Thank you for your time, Hirano-san. You've been a great help."

The girl quietly nods, studying the number with a small frown etched into her face. "It's the least I can do."

"You'll be fine. When the police get here just tell them the truth.

They'll believe you. I promise."

I hope he'll be safe. I did this to help him, I don't want him to get hurt because of it.

When the man pushes open the door Tamakawa and another officer there to take the girl to her parents are waiting for him, he speed-walks past the two, the feline hot on his trail. "Narrow that dojo search for Piper to Muay Thai ones. This could finally give us a lead," he pauses, "We got lucky with that girl," There's a lull of silence between the two as Naomasa continues turning the possibilities over in his head. "There's a chance that Piper learned to fight outside of a dojo, from a family or a friend maybe, or even outside of Musutafu or Japan. But, this is the best lead we've had so far and we can't pass it up."

Sansa nods. "If there really are as few dojos as that girl made it out to

be then it's possible that we could find Piper within the next few days," Tamakawa muses, whiskers twitching.

Naomasa lets out a non committal hum, "At the very least I'm hoping for a few suspects. Get me a list of all the local dojos and the times that they're open, I'll try to visit some as well."

Midoriya is late again, after having fallen asleep on the roof during lunch there'd been no one to wake him up and he'd ended up sleeping through the last half of the day. He blamed the two perverts from last night. He'd been two on one against some peeping toms. It should have been an easy clean up, but one had managed to use their quirk to escape and the boy had spent an extra hour chasing the tiny, purple-haired idiot which had left the vigilante far outside his normal patrol area.

He still feels a little dazed from his nap, even with the adrenaline high he has after sprinting from school to the dojo. He glances at his reflection in the windows making sure the foundation covering the fading bruise on his cheek is still there before he bursts through the door. A "Sorry I'm late!" on his lips. He rushes towards their small bathroom, blazer already stuffed in his backpack and half tugging his shirt off before he even reaches the door.

"Shoes!" Chee Sensei barks.

"Shit." He stops trying to pull his shirt off and instead turns to his shoes, half hobbling, half jumping just to get them off before chunking them back towards the door. "Sorry!"

Everyone pauses to follow his journey across the room, two too many sets of eyes tracking him.

He stumbles out of the bathroom a few minutes later, not completely put together but more so than when he'd first run in.

"Midoriya." He looks up at Chee Sensei's call. Now noticing the two men standing at her hip, one who looks strangely familiar.

"Fujimori-san?" There's a sharp spike of fear at seeing the police after what he'd been up to the last few months. *Why are they here? Did they sniff me out?* Izuku tenses slightly, ready to make a dash for the door if need be.

But, the officer only smiles, easing the boy's nerves. "Midoriya-san, I thought that was you. You rushed by too quickly for me to be certain though."

The fifteen year old flushes, nerves still on edges. He tries to hide the fact with a short bow as the other man and Ji-woo eye the two.

"You two know each other?"

Fujimori turns to the man by his side. "Detective Tsukauchi, this is Midoriya Izuku. He helped in a kidnapping case a few months ago. He the one who found Hogai's daughter."

Izuku's eyes snap up to look at the Detective. *I wonder if Reo's related to him?*

"This is the boy that saved her?" Naomasa asks, surprised as he turns to meet the boy's eyes. He's surprisingly muscular for his age, though his figure is more lean than stout.

Midoriya opens his mouth to protest, but he's cut off by Fujimori's quick reply of, "Yes."

A smile pulls at Naomasa's lips. "What a small world we've found ourselves in. I know Hogai-san sends his thanks for saving his daughter. You did a good job Midoriya-san."

Izuku nods rather reluctantly, thinking back on all of the things he'd done wrong in that situation. He mumbles a half hearted, "Yeah."

Naomasa says nothing when his quirk registers the lie, only gives the boy a small smile before he continues speaking. "I'm glad you're here though. We were just about to head out, but I'd like to ask you a few questions before we leave if that's fine with you young man."

Midoriya casts a wary glance at Chee Sensei. Her pitch eyes are unreadable, but her freckles are flared just the slightest bit brighter than usual, hinting at a seed of agitation.

"Do you know anything about a vigilante by the name of Pied Piper?"

Izuku freezes up immediately, completely blindsided by the question. "What?" He stares at the two dumbly, his previous fear crawling back up his throat.

In his mind the creature rears its head, maw opening with a caustic

grin and acidulous words. *“They’ve found you. You were careless and they found you,”* it hisses, *“It’s only been a few months and yet you’ve already been caught. Useless. You’ve never stopped being useless.”*

Midoriya clamps down on the voice, trying desperately to shut it up. He can see the detective’s mouth moving, forming words that he can’t quite understand over the blood roaring in his ears and the voice hissing in his mind. But, he knows no matter what he does *he* won’t be able to answer. So, he lets Piper answer instead.

“Sorry about that Detective, could you repeat that? I didn’t get much sleep last night so my brain’s still a little fried.” He feels like he’s on autopilot, and the easy smile on his lips feels like it’s made of crumbling sand.

Chee Sensei scowls at the boy. “How many times have I told you, take care of yourself first Midoriya. Missing one day isn’t going to ruin you.”

The fifteen year old scratches shyly at the back of his head. “I took a nap during lunch,” he explains, “I thought I’d be fine.”

When Naomasa’s quirk registers the small lie he can’t help the minute downward tick of his lips. The lie reminiscent of something Yagi would say. The detective gently clears his throat, trying to lead the conversation back to the situation at hand. “Nevermind that first question. Can I ask what you what you were doing last Saturday at around 11:30 pm?”

Midoriya gives the question some serious thought, trying to remember for himself what he’d been doing. Obviously he’d been out patrolling by then, but… He freezes up again, the thoughtful expression he’d taken on quickly dissolving.

The change is a noticeable one.

“I was sleeping,” he blurts out, panicking as Piper’s facade begins to crumble.

Naomasa’s quirk reacts, rearing up at the obvious lie. The detective’s lips tick downwards.

Chee Sensei’s eyes narrow, pitch boring into jade. “That’s a lie Midoriya.”

Hurdles weren’t an unusual sight on Izuku’s race track. They had

become everyday occurrences after he'd taken the name Piper. Every night, with every criminal encounter, he was forced to, once again, face the hurdle of his quirklessness. Despite this he continued to push himself, continued to run faster, jump higher, continued to pass all of the peers who had looked down upon him. Continued to pass all of those racing just ahead of him under the assumption that he'd never catch up. But, now he fears he'd encountered a hurdle that he simply wouldn't be able to jump, and for once it wouldn't have anything to do with being quirkless.

Suddenly he feels like throwing up, his sun flickering beneath the gravity of Chee Sensei's words. He wants the floor to heave upwards, splitting the ground under his feet. He wants the earth to consume him.

The boy opens his mouth to respond, but it only closes again with an audible click. He doesn't know what to say.

But, the three are silent, waiting on him to answer the accusation.

Eventually he forces his vocal cords to respond. "I was training?" he murmurs half-heartedly. *Not technically a lie.*

Ji-woo's freckles *flare* , brighter than he'd seen them in over a year. The woman wasn't one to show many emotions. And, if Midoriya hadn't been around her as long as he had been and wasn't as observant as he was he's sure he wouldn't have seen the anger residing on her face.

She makes a swipe at the back of his head and he ducks away from it on instinct alone, eyes wide as he stumbles back, the woman following him. "Training is reserved for the dojo," she seethes, "If you're so insistent on overworking yourself then join a damn competition once in awhile!"

"I-It's not what you're thinking! I-I was just feeling restless!"

Lie.

All eyes in the dojo are trained on the student and teacher, the others dumbfounded by the woman's outburst.

Naomasa eyes them as well as Fujimori goes to try and defuse the situation. Ji-woo lets out a sigh, the boy watching her freckles dim as she reins in her anger. "That's all of my students that are here today Detective. If you're done I'd like to make the most of what they're

paying to be here for."

The man startles somewhat, "Of course, thank you for your time Chee-san, Midoriya-san." He tips his hat to the two of them before motioning for the other man to follow him out.

"Why were they here?" Izuku asks warily eyeing the woman after Fujimori and the Detective had bid their goodbyes. The two watch the duo slip out through the door, climbing into a police cruiser parked on the curb that Midoriya's brain had conveniently decided not to register on his way in.

"A friend of mine who runs another gym across the city called me yesterday to tell me that the police were doing rounds on the local Muay Thai dojos. Evidently they were asking questions about that Pied Piper character. I'd assume they're looking for suspects, but I don't see how questioning a bunch of middle schoolers and high schoolers like you all will help."

Midoriya's thoughts immediately snap to Hirano and Tanaka. He curses internally, *one of them must have let it slip.*

"But, don't think I'll forget about our earlier exchange Midoriya." He looks over at her, worry seeping into his jade eyes. He's unable to tell if she's actually looking at him or still watching the two men as they climb into the patrol car. "If I so much as suspect that you're staying up late just to train like I think you are I *will* go to your mother about it."

The boy pales. "I-I swear it's not what you're thinking. I've just been having trouble sleeping every now and then and training helps tire me out." He's lying straight through his teeth at this point, but he meets Ji-woo's gaze with a look that must convince her otherwise because all she does is let out a long sigh.

" *Please* take care of yourself Midoriya. You'll end up sending your mother to an early grave if you keep this up."

The boy tenses, guilt seeping lead into his limbs. "Hai…"

The next week goes by smoothly and he *does* try to take better care of himself for both Chee Sensei and his mother's sakes. He'd been staying out later than usual in the weeks leading up to that point, usually pushing his patrols an extra hour or just talking with Reo until three.

So, he tries to be home by two from now on during school nights.

But, there are of course exceptions to this rule. Such as when he's mid chase or say… when he's been cornered by a hero.

He must have gotten too close to the nice part of town while he was chasing the unconscious thief at his feet. He hadn't meant to knock the man unconscious, the vigilante had merely tripped him with a foot, but his head had collided rather harshly with the pavement. Midoriya can't say he regrets it too much at first. But, once Snipe makes his appearance Piper supposes that he could've been a better hostage if he was awake and standing. But, as it is the man is out cold on the concrete and much too heavy for Izuku pick up and use as a shield to keep the hero from firing on him.

He's frozen, a deadly cocktail of fear and adrenaline pulsing through him at the thought of having to face yet another hero after his last two encounters.

"Drop the weapon."

Midoriya does so without hesitation, letting the pipe fall to the concrete with a loud, hollow clang. His hands rise on their own, hovering at the sides of his head.

Snipe doesn't miss, his mind informs him. Even through his fear seeped mind his hero analysis notes come back to him. Drifting up to him like a dream. *If he doesn't miss then….*

"Turn around, hands behind your back." The vigilante does as instructed, watching from the corner of his eyes as the hero slides his gun back in its holster. A lead weight settles in the pit of his stomach when he feels a pair of cuffs snap around his wrists.

Stay calm, it's part of the plan.

Piper bites the corner of his lip as the hero moves his grab to the boy's forearm. His hands sweat, he'd never tried pickpocketing someone before, but surely this would be easier. After all, he wasn't having to reach into the hero's pocket.

All he had to do was grab the gun.

Snipe was a good hero. But, he, like everyone else, had weaknesses. Snipe was a teacher, because of this he didn't underestimate per se, but he let his guard down around younger criminals when they

seemed to be showing no signs of resistance.

Piper's hands slowly wrap around the grip of the hero's weapon.

His other weakness was that he only had one gun.

Midoriya rips his arm from the man's hold, dragging the gun with him as he takes off, tearing around the corner of the alley. He can hear Snipe cursing behind him, reaching for a gun that's no longer there.

He's too scared to feel giddy, but there's still the undeniable sound of choked laughter that bubbles past his lips as he runs.

"I need backup! We have a downed villain and another that's getting away! Pin my location and send someone to collect the unconscious one! I'm going after the other!"

Piper blindly slips down an alley, the hero hot on his trail.

There's fear in his lungs and in his heart and in his limbs, pushing him to run faster, pushing him to keep going.

I don't want this to be the end.

"Useless little doll. Everyone's least favorite plaything. If only you had

a quirk, none of this would have happened." In his head the voice fills his skull

like muddy flood water, drowning out everything else. It's maw pulls

itself into a cheshire grin, sharpened teeth dripping tar.

"How unfortunate for you."

The boy barrels out the end of the alley into a street full of people bar hopping.

"Stop him!"

But, no one does, no one even so much as reaches out a hand to try to slow the vigilante down. In fact they clear a path, wide eyed at the handcuffed teen tearing through the streets. Several pull out their

phones, recording the chase over the heads of those in front of them.

Neon signs line the buildings, all of them blurring together in a nauseating kaleidoscope of color. Behind him the crowd closes like a sea, further separating him from the hero.

But, he keeps running, slipping down another alley as fast as he's able to after making sure Snipe's direct line of sight had been broken. The sounds of nightlife fade behind him and he can't hear a second pair of steps following him. But still, he keeps running, keeps ducking down alleys and cutting through construction sites, not knowing where he's going until he finds himself alone outside a familiar convenience store. The vigilante wheezes as he comes to a stop, too tired to run any farther. His lungs spasm in his chest, each breath scorching through him on it's way in.

He can see Reo's apartment building up ahead, and it takes a moment, but he forces his limbs to move again. It's slow going and his legs shake beneath him but eventually Midoriya ducks down the building's side alley, collapsing into the wall for support as he tries to steady his breathing.

His wrists are still bound uncomfortably behind his back, the area around the cuffs now raw from being joseled during his escape. The fifteen year old lowers himself carefully to the ground, setting Snipe's gun to the side and letting his head fall back against the brick wall behind him once he's firmly planted.

"This is the first time I've been in cuffs before," he mutters to himself.

He manages after a moment to maneuver himself into a position where he's able to slip his cuffed wrists underneath his body, bringing his hands back in front of him.

It's the last thing he wants to do. But, Midoriya knows he'd never be able to make it up to Reo's window with the state he's currently in. He wouldn't be able to make the jump to grab onto the ladder, let alone haul himself up it unassisted with his hands bound the way they are.

"Tsukauchi!" His throat is hoarse, and the name comes out scratchy, but it's enough.

In his room Reo startles, looking towards the window. The teen had taken to leaving it cracked as of late, not only had the weather been nice enough for it, but it also saved him the trouble of having to let Midoriya in everytime he dropped by for a visit.

“Tsukauchi!” the call is a little louder this time.

Reo pushes himself up, dragging the window open the rest of the way.

“Midoriya?” His voice is much quieter, calling out to the other boy with a whispered shout. The seventeen year old hauls himself out the window, peeking over the rails of the fire escape to look down at the vigilante.

Izuku simply holds up his hands, showing off the bulky cuffs clamped around his wrists. He gives the older boy an exhausted and wobbly smile. “Help?”

Pied Piper Chased By Pro Hero Snipe *GOT AWAY*

1,938,849 views

4,182 comments

yadixkp - 10 hours ago

What did this Pied Piper dude even do this time? The last time

he had a video like this blow up he was just trying to stop

some sleaze bag

softhawks - 8 hours ago

I wonder how he’s planning on getting those cuffs off lmao

clownfuckery - 3 hours ago

BRO IS THAT SNIPE’S GUN IN HIS HANDS??!?!?!??

IM AKJD;SHFAJ’KSDF

reonhatoo - 5 hours ago

I love how literally no one is doing anything to stop him dskl;ajf

Glitxd_observer - 2 hours ago

There are obviously going to be people who say differently but

Piper is actually a really good hero, even if he’s doing it

illegally he’s saved quite a few people and has helped put away

a lot of /actual/ criminals

ElectroSambouwo - now

THIS GUY IS REALLY OUT HERE JUST RUNNING AROUND

WITH SNIPE’S WEAPON WHAT A LEGEND WHAT AN

ABSOLUTE M A D L A D

Chapter End Notes

Here's some chapter art for this week!

> I made some new art for my vigilante midoriya fic hope everyonelikes it pic.twitter.com/8MHnLNND5s
>
> — blackhole.c.a @ commissions (@blackholeca) June 18, 2019

Anyways! I hope you all enjoyed yet another chapter! Thank you all for you support and your comments! Until next week!!

Orbital Sunrise

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Before we get started!!! I got FANART
LIKE HOLY SHIT I SCREAMED THANK YOU SO MUCH ILY

DogiCrimson

“Are you really going back out there? They could be staking out the area to see if you come back for it.”

Midoriya scowls, knowing that the boy is right. But, he feels like he’s lost a limb. He has school tomorrow and dojo directly afterwards so he can’t just go looking for it in the morning. His hands feel just a little bit empty and useless without it.

He rubs at where the cuffs had dug into his wrists. It’d taken Reo a good hour and a half to cut through them without also hurting the boy. “Do you have a different hoodie I could borrow? I don’t want to go back looking like Piper if there are still people looking for me.”

Tsukauchi sighs, “Yeah. Here.” Reo takes a moment to dig through his closet before tossing him a hoodie, the younger boy slipping it on without really looking at it. When he does, he grimaces. “Is this really the only hoodie I can borrow?” Midoriya looks down distastefully at the piece of clothing.

Reo stifles a laugh, “You said you didn’t want to look like a vigilante.”

The fifteen year old gives him a disgruntled look before looking back at the obnoxiously bright Wild, Wild Pussycats design. “Don’t get me wrong I love them, “Rock on with these sparkling gazes” and all that jazz. But, isn’t this a *bit* too eye catching?”

“I think it’s *perrrfect* for what you’re doing.”

“This is revenge for coming in with handcuffs, isn't it?”

“Just a little bit,” Tsukauchi replies, grinning.

Midoriya huffs out a laugh before the vigilante pulls open his right eye, pinching out the red contact. He blinks a few times, clearing his vision. “Do you have something I could put this in? Like a sandwich bag or something?”

Reo nods. “Yeah, just give me a sec.” He sneaks out the bedroom door, coming back a few moments later with a small snack bag and a bottle of saline solution. “Here, my mom wears contacts too, I figured you’d need it.”

“Thanks.”

Reo blinks at him dumbly. “I’ve never seen you like this.”

Midoriya looks up, confused by the words as he slips the bag in his pants pocket. “Like what?”

“Normal.”

Izuku lets out a surprised laugh. “I guess this is your first time seeing me completely out of costume, huh?” He steps over to one of the teen’s worktables, carefully picking up Snipe’s gun from where he’d left it.

“I still can’t believe you took his gun.”

“It’s the only weakness of his that I could exploit,” Midoriya whines, a little laughter seeping into his voice. “I’ll make sure to return it at some point though. See you later, thanks for getting those off.”

Reo settles himself back into his desk chair. “No big deal, it’ll give me something to study. Plus, if I can figure out how they work I might just be able to tell you how to get them off by yourself the next time.”

Midoriya slips out the window, pulling his shoes on. “Hopefully there won’t be a next time.”

“Hopefully,” Tsukauchi parrots back.

Once Midoriya gets close to the alley he’d escaped from he slips his face mask back on just to be safe. He hopes it’ll be enough to disguise his identity if anyone’s loitering around the site looking for him.

When he gets there he doesn’t see the pipe and his heart immediately drops. *If they took it to the police station they could easily lift my prints,*

he glances down quickly at his bare hands before his eyes go to fly around the alley. He moves boxes and peeks behind and underneath the trash cans and dumpsters. *My prints shouldn't be registered in any of their systems, but there's always the off chance. And if I ever get caught all they have to do is get my prints and match them up. It'd be a death sentence.* Midoriya peeks into one of the dumpsters, eyes spying a glint of metal. He frowns, unable to see it clearly in the shadow of the dumpsters walls. "Shit," Izuku mutters, quickly jumping check in to check what it is. He picks it up almost gently, fearful that it's not what he's looking for. But, it is the cool metal fitting seamlessly into his palms. "I can't believe they thought you were garbage."

"You should be there with it, the abandoned plaything left to rot

with molding food. How suiting of a cockroach."

Midoriya frowns, heart clenching as he leaps back out of the dumpster. The vigilante sniffs Reo's hoodie with a look of disgust. "Sorry Tsukauchi, I don't know if I'll be able to get this smell out." He looks down, grimacing when he also sees an unidentified substance clinging to his sneakers. He lets out a quiet whine, "My shoes…"

He tries his best to scrape it off on the concrete as he slips the end of the staff down the back of one of his pant legs and pulls the hoodie over the top of it. *I can't just walk around with my staff out when people could be looking for Piper.*

Everything goes smoothly except for the one cop he runs into who asks him what he was doing out so late. Midoriya makes up some half assed excuse about going to get his mom from work because his brother had a fever. The officer lets him go without another word, not questioning the boy's irregular gait if he notices.

From there he heads home for the night. He's only an hour later than he should be, but he feels completely exhausted as he tugs everything off and pulls on some actual pajamas. He tosses Reo's hoodie in his dirty clothes pile before slipping into bed, already half asleep.

The encounter with Snipe had scared the boy. Scared him to the point where he has nightmares that night of getting caught, of not running fast enough, of ending up with a bullet through his chest. It's enough for him to start thinking about better protection, better gear.

But, with summer drawing closer both he and Reo had found

themselves stressing over their upcoming exams. And, seeing how diligently the older teen had been pouring himself over his school projects Midoriya couldn't find the heart to ask him to do anything more.

He realizes that he can't drag anymore civilian into his vigilante scheme, but this conclusion places an even larger pill on the table that he sits at, a pill that has been labeled 'villain'. He reluctantly picks up the pill and swallows, commissioning the purchase of a few specialty items from one of the illegal support gear dealers he'd met while tailing another criminal.

The vigilante had been chasing the man a good quarter mile, just on his heels. And so, when his target slams through the door of a nondescript building, voice rawly shouting, "Help!" It slows the man down enough to where the boy finally gets the chance to knock the feet out from under him. He hits the ground stomach first, jaw slamming painfully into the floor as the air is knocked from his lungs.

Piper scowls, pressing his foot into the man's back when he tries rising. The boy's chest heaves after the mad sprint through the streets. "I just wanted to ask you a question damnit. Why the hell did you run."

"Help!" The man shouts instead. The vigilante's head snaps up, taking in his surroundings. It's some sort of warehouse, mostly empty, but there are a few crates and boxes stacked along the walls. "Help!" the man's voice echoes and Piper presses down harder on the guy's back in warning.

There's a metal staircase on the wall to his left that leads up to an office, the large windows looking into it shuttered with blinds. He doesn't see anyone, but that only makes the vigilante more wary. He takes his chances and quickly zip ties the man's hands together.

"Giran!"

Midoriya's eyes snap towards the second story office again, slowly pulling himself out of his crouch as a new man steps out the door, lit cigarette between his fingers. "Junko, I thought I told you that we weren't doing business together anymore."

When the newcomer takes in the full situation there's a cat like grin that pulls at his lips, showing off his missing tooth. His glasses ride up his nose, glinting in the overhead lights of the warehouse. "Well if it isn't Musutafu's little Pied Piper." His grin widens. "To what do I owe the pleasure?"

Midoriya had seriously debated working with the criminal, but if he wanted to keep himself on patrol then he'd have to make sure that he could keep himself from getting seriously injured. Or, at the very least, to make sure he could keep himself alive.

At first he'd only gone in to get a lightweight bulletproof vest of some sort. But, mid meeting he'd had the thought to have his elbow and knee pads replaced with something of a more professional grade, and maybe a few more protective pieces. Then he'd realized that a hoodie and sweatpants weren't the best thing one could wear to fight crime. And, there were also the few weapons he'd ended up asking for…. So, in the end his shopping list had been just a *bit* longer than originally anticipated. He'd wracked up quite a bill if Giran's gap toothed smile had been anything to go by, but with all the drug dealers he'd been encountering recently, the vigilante had saved up more than enough money in cash alone. Giran hands him an untraceable phone before he leaves. The man calls it a sign of his 'loyalty' and their 'friendship' and told him this is how they'd get in touch.

Izuku was sure to ask Tsukauchi to check if they were bugged.

Not even a week after he'd put in his 'order' with the broker, Midoriya gets a call on the phone he'd been gifted.

Midoriya would've spent the entire night studying for his finals in the morning if it had been anything other than Giran's voice on the other end of the line telling him that his stuff was ready.

He's there within thirty minutes.

"I can give you the gear you asked for," Giran says, "but you'll have to find your weapons elsewhere," the broker sighs, "If it gets out that I'm giving you gear I'd be ruined. And if someone found out that I'd given you weapons too? I'd be dead, you know that. I can't break my clients' trust like that." The man grins as he slides a bag across the desk to the boy. "I've got lots of clientele that come to me griping about you, you know?"

It's been almost two weeks since he'd first met the man and only five days since he'd commissioned him.

And, despite the fact that he's sitting across from a villain, he can't

help himself from feeling a little giddy about the aspect of getting an actual ‘hero’ costume.

“I’d tell you how I can easily solve that problem but you probably wouldn’t like the outcome,” the vigilante replies, eyes crinkling and smirk forming behind his mask. He peeks into the bag, eyes catching on the bulletproof vest on top. “It’s a shame though, I was looking forward to those weapons.”

Giran huffs, “Yeah, yeah. Now get outta here. Don’t you have criminals to lock up?”

Midoriya laughs, passing a large wad of cash to the man, “Yeah, maybe even more than usual with all this.” He glances up, eyes locking for a moment with Giran’s. “The shoes still have spikes though right?”

The man’s grin turns cat-like. “Of course. I keep my promises Piper.”

The next day, after finals are over he sleeps. An entire day and night. Exhausted both mentally and physically. He’d strained himself. Trying to balance his time between vigilante work and school work and the dojo had ended with his already desolate sleeping schedule looking like it’d been the ground zero of a nuclear air raid.

So, he sleeps to make up for it and the next time he wakes up it’s early afternoon the next day and Inko is long gone for work. He excitedly shoves all of his new gear into his backpack to show Tsukauchi later and awkwardly shimmies Piper’s pipe down his pant leg again.

For once he leaves out their front door just like any other regular citizen.

As he walks he thinks about how’d he’d never actually gone to see the boy during daylight hours. He honestly feels a little giddy about the fact that that’s about to change. He’s a little wary about scaling the teen’s fire escape in broad daylight, but he’s in civilian clothes this time so he figures if someone sees him it wouldn’t be as disastrous of a discovery.

He knocks on the window as he slides his shoes off. *He’s not expecting me so I shouldn’t just barge in.* The curtains part cautiously, revealing a sleep ruffled Reo that looks as if he’s only just woken up.

“Midoriya?”

Izuku can only see the name mouthed through the glass and waves sheepishly at the older teen.

He slips his backpack off and sends it through the window first as Reo opens it. “Morning Tsukauchi. I didn’t wake you up did I?” The fifteen year old carefully slides the pipe out from his clothes, leaning it against the outer wall as the older boy watches on in amusement.

“You did actually.”

Izuku is halfway through the window when there’s a heavy knock on Tsukuachi’s door. “Reo, you better be up, it’s almost two.” The door opens without another word, revealing a middle aged woman. She pauses mid step, only able to stare for a moment. Her hair is pulled up into a half-bun, dark eyes taking in the scene before her. “Reo,” her voice is calm, “Who is that?”

Midoriya’s eyes zip towards the seventeen year old, both of them frozen in their spots. Tsukauchi is stuck holding his backpack full of vigilante gear, trying not to gape at the woman and Izuku is still rooted in his position half way through the window.

“Reo?” She says again, jolting the boy into answering.

“Mom!” Tsukauchi’s voice jumps in pitch, “This is Midoriya! My friend!”

The fifteen year old startles at being referred to as a friend, eyes widening.

Sweat beads on both boys’ brows, watching the woman for a reaction.

“Of course it would be a friend of yours,” she sighs exasperated, “Well come in then, no use hanging there like a window box.”

Midoriya carefully creeps the rest of the way in, embarrassed when the woman takes obvious note of his All Might socks and bright yellow Fatgum hoodie.

“So, I’ll assume that you’re the one my brother caught here a month ago?”

Midoriya internally cringes, recalling his mad dash out Reo’s window. “Yes ma’am…” he murmurs quietly. Izuku bows sheepishly,

introducing himself before quietly apologizing for the disruption.

There's an air of silence that falls over the three of them, the two boys not daring to move. "Are you dating?"

There's another beat of silence before all hell breaks loose.

"No!"

"Absolutely not!"

"We're friends!"

"He's my friend!"

Midoriya hands helicopter around his face, cheeks flushed a beet red. Beside him Tsukauchi fares no better. Midoriya lets out a strangled noise before they fall into another spell of silence.

"Well," Ms. Tsukauchi hums, a mischievous glint to her eyes. She looks between the two of them in mild amusement, "I'll leave you to it then. It was nice meeting you Midoriya. You're more than welcome to leave through the door if you'd rather." She turns, leaving the room, but stops last second, peaking back in to eye them with a vexatious smile. "Dinner is at six if you decide to stick around long enough."

The two deflate the moment the woman closes the door behind her. Midoriya can't find the strength to respond, moving to collapse onto the bed.

Reo lets out the breath he'd been holding, slumping down into his chair. "Sorry. I should've warned you that she's like that."

Midoriya brings his hands up to drag them down his face, cheeks hot beneath his fingers. "She reminds me of my mom only like… twelve times as mischievous."

They fall into a casual silence for a few moments before Reo speaks up again. "So, what are you doing here so early?"

The fifteen year old's eyes light up, scrambling to push himself back up and grab his bag from where Reo had set it. He hauls it up, plopping it down on the bed beside him.

He pulls out Reo's sweatshirt first and tosses it to him before he starts digging again

“My hoodie? Took you long enough. I thought I was never getting this back.”

“I had to wash it a few times to get the smell out.”

“The sm-“ Reo looks at him wide eyed. “You know what. I don’t even want to know.”

“It’s probably better that you don’t. But, that’s not the main reason why I’m here. That broker guy I told you about called again.” Midoriya glances at him, eyes alight with a flame as bright as the sun in his chest when he starts pulling everything out, the grin on his face stretching with each new item. “I got a bulletproof vest, and metal plated arm and shin guards, and I got new hero grade knee and elbow pads, and since I’m climbing buildings and stuff a lot I got some gloves to help with grip. Then, since it’s been getting hotter I got a new hoodie and some cargo pants, they’re made out of a really lightweight and breathable material. They look normal, but they’re actually super durable and made out of the same material some pros use for their suits! And look! Look! Boots! With spikes!” The boy’s eyes sparkle with excitement as Reo studies each of the items the vigilante drags out.

Reo lets out his own excited laugh. “How much did all of this even cost you?”

“Wads of cash from six different drug dealers.”

Tsukauchi grins. “Is that how you’re counting your money now? By drug dealers?”

“What?” Midoriya teases, “You aren’t?”

From there they fall into idle conversation as Reo looks over the gear, checking that there’s no sort of tracking devices or bugs and anything else that’s seemingly suspicious. Nothing comes up and by the time they’ve finished fan boying over the new gear its 2pm and Reo is shoveling bites cereal into his mouth between sentences.

“There’s obviously more stuff you can get, or that I can make for you. You said your dealer wouldn’t get you weapons so I’m sure most of my time will go to stuff like that for you. But, I think it’d also be cool have something other than just your flimsy face mask to hide your identity,” Reo mumbles, trying to speak around the food in his mouth.

Midoriya scratches at his chin, thinking it over. “You’re right.” The

fifteen year old checks the time on his phone, pursing his lips. “I should probably head out now. I wanted to do some patrolling to test out the new gear.”

Reo looks up at him. “It’s not even three yet, are you sure you want to head out so soon? We can think up some designs for a mask if you want to.”

“I would, but since it’s summer break I was thinking about trying some daytime patrols. I mean sure you can catch people out and about late at night, but in the end you’ll be able to help more people when there *are* more people. It won't be an everyday thing since I still have dojo, but I’ll help when I can.”

Reo hums in acknowledgement. “So no more nighttime patrols?”

“I’ll still do nighttime stuff. I’m thinking of splitting everything into quarters. I can sleep late in the mornings, and then if these daytime patrols go well I can stay out until dinner, sleep some more and keep mostly the same night patrol pattern that I had during school.”

Reo lets out a low whistle, “No rest for the wicked then huh?”

Midoriya’s eyes flicker towards the window. “If there’s no rest for the wicked then there’s none for the righteous either. That’s just how the world is.”

“That’s how the world *should* be,” Tsukauchi corrects him, twirling slowly in his chair as he stares up at the ceiling.

Midoriya hums in agreement as he pushes himself up. “You mind if I change in here?”

Reo rolls himself towards the bedroom door, scooping another bite of cereal into his mouth. “Go ahead, I’ll keep guard.” He turns his back to the boy, facing the corner as he presses his ear to the door, continuing to eat.

The vigilante starts with his contact, before pulling on all the new gear, the transformation taking only a few minutes. “Alright, you’re good,” he calls, opening the window as he sets his new boots outside for later. “How do I look?”

“Like a semi-professional vigilante in All Might socks and not just someone who got their gear at a thrift store.” Tsukauchi gives him a playful smile as Midoriya huffs in mock offense.

“I’ll have you know I got my old stuff from my *closet* and my pipe from a garbage dump, *not* that it’s any of *your* business.” Izuku isn’t able to keep his lips from rising into a grin behind his mask.

“ *Wow,* a *garbage dump* . That’s some high quality product you have there. I’m sorry if I offended you.”

The two send each other matching grins as Midoriya shoves his other clothes into his bag, leaning out the window to grab the shoes he’d came in to shove them upside down on top. “Do you mind if I leave this here? I don’t wanna take it with me on patrol. I’ll come back for it afterwards.”

“That’s fine.” Tsukauchi rolls over, taking the backpack from the boy and tucking it in his closet. “Be safe out there, yeah? Villains aren’t the only people more active during the day. Watch out for cops and heroes. It’d be a shame to waste all that drug money by getting caught immediately.” He grins at the younger boy, amber eyes twinkling.

“Awww, you *do* care.”

With his new schedule his vigilante activity rises exponentially. His first few daytime expeditions are stressful and he constantly worries about being recognized as Midoriya Izuku and not just Piper. But, surprisingly the only thing outside of Piper that he gets mistaken for is a hero. There’s an old woman on the first day that thanks him for his service and on the third a little boy and his mom walk up to him asking if they can get a picture with him. At one point there’s even an *actual hero* that Midoriya recognizes from his hero news site that waves at him thinking he’s a new hero or something. He tries to stay out of sight, taking less crowded streets and sticking to alleys when he can, but he still manages to draw the eye.

_____

Boy Takes Picture With Supposed Hero, Mother Shocked To Discover It Was A Vigilante!

By Akihito Jun

August 3, 2231

The mother of a young five year old hero fan is mortified after a shocking discovery! One afternoon in the last week of July Yamazaki Sayuri and her son Shun come across a young man in what they assume is a pro hero uniform. But, it wasn't a hero either of them recognized. This did not deter the young Shun though, the five year old excited by the aspect of meeting a new hero. At her son's insistence they approach the hero, Yamazaki asks if they'd be willing to take a picture with her son. In an interview I did with Yamazaki-san she said that, "He seemed a little reluctant to answer at first." But, she figured that it "was because he was on patrol or because he'd never been approached by someone asking for a picture before."

"He said yes after my son asked him personally. We took our picture and left and I didn't really think much about it afterwards." But, after posting the image on her social media profile she received a comment claiming that this so called 'hero' that she let her son take a picture with wasn't actually a hero! Instead it was a vigilante!

For this I turned to the internet for more information. I was able to get in contact with the owner of a popular hero blog, RoyalViperOK, to help me piece this story together. RoyalViper, after some research was able to confirm the "hero's" identity as that of an up and coming vigilante going by the name of Pied Piper. Viper explained over email that the vigilante had recently gained a new wardrobe, but that the staff-like pipe which could be seen in Yamazaki-san's picture was "a clear indicator of who he is". RoyalViperOK confirmed to me that without a doubt this mysterious "hero" was in fact a vigilante and not just a low ranked pro as Yamazaki-san and her son had originally believed.

RoyalViperOK predicts that instances such as these aren't actually as uncommon as we believe. "I'm sure that most people who look at Piper not knowing who he is would make the assumption that he's a hero. He can look the part to many and he doesn't give off the sinister aura that most criminals would. There aren't many active vigilantes anymore and so the idea of their existence gets pushed to the backs of most peoples' minds. Because of this, the possibility that someone like Piper being recognized as something other than a hero are slim. Most people dismiss his existence after coming to the conclusion that he's not a villain, their minds equating the "not villain" signal with "hero"."

Viper tells us that this specific vigilante has been much more active as

of late, having only recently taken up a routine of patrolling during the day. Which as RoyalViper stated, was “a bold move for any kind criminal”. “

Really, if you think about it,” Viper says in the last of our emails that, “It’d be easy for anyone to mistake someone like that for a pro hero.”

I attempted to contact young Shun’s mother again for comment after sharing with her the information I received from RoyalViperOk, but, as of yet, she has not been able to be reached.

Yamazaki-san has since removed the picture from her profile.

© 2231 Musutafu Hero Reporting, a division

of Musutafu Daily Network, LLC.

Over the next few days Midoriya and Reo meet up several more times, brainstorming ideas for a new mask and sharing stories from the vigilante’s patrols. At some point they come to the realization that they should exchange numbers. Originally the boy had never taken his phone with him on night patrols. But, now that he was out during the day he always worried his mother would try and contact him while he was out. Izuku, had been flustered when Reo has started listing off his contact info, struggling to keep up through his surprise and excitement because, *this is was friends do.*

Reo masks his own excitement with an excuse. Claiming that it’s only “to make sure you don’t go off and die without telling me.” Which is a valid excuse, but he also enjoys the idea of being able to talk with the boy whenever he wants and not just when he decides to show up every day or two.

Wikipedia

You home yet?

Pipe-kun

Yeah

Just got back from patrol

Wikipedia

Your mom is out of town tonight right?

Pipe-kun

She's on a business trip

Why?

Wikipedia

My mom wants you over for dinner

I tried to warn you

You won't be able to escape family dinner

I already told her you were coming

I also finished making those smoke bombs sooooo

Midoriya pauses in pulling off his knee guards, staring down at his phone incredulous.

Pipe-kun

You realize that the government reads this stuff right?

Wikipedia

You're not the only one with an untraceable phone

Anyways

Dinner is at 6

See you here :))

Pipe-kun

Fine.

I'll be over in like 30 minutes

I have to finish changing

There's a moment of pause before another message comes through on Midoriya's phone.

Wikipedia

You know I just realized that your vigilante initials spell out PP

Wikipedia changed your nickname to PP

PP

Do you want to die?

Wikipedia changed your nickname to PeePee

Wikipedia

:)

True to his word Midoriya shows up at the boy's apartment some half hour later, backpack stuffed with his gear for later that night.

"All right," Reo stays, spinning around in his chair as soon as the vigilante crawls through the window. "I was busy with finals so I had to put them off for awhile, but I finished them."

"It's literally been less than a week since finals," Midoriya says, looking up.

"And?" The teen slides in his chair to his other workshop table. "I've only made three so far so use them sparingly."

The fifteen year old laughs, excited but unsurprised as he walks up to meet the other boy.

Tsukauchi picks up a utility belt, three tubular objects strapped in on

one side. “I figured you’d need something to hold them as well so I made a belt as well. It also has room for future projects I’m planning on, and they match your shoes!”

Reo doesn’t miss the nebula that forms inside of the vigilante’s polychrome eyes at seeing his latest project.

“They’re all smoke bombs right now, but I was thinking I could make a few flash bangs later on.”

“How did you even get the materials for these?” Izuku asks, reverently taking the belt from his friend to inspect it. “I didn’t think you had any drug money,” he jokes, amazed smile pulling at his lips.

“My school supplies any and all materials I need for any of my projects. Smoke grenades aren’t basic staple in our department so it won’t raise any eyebrows either. Make sure you put them to good use, yeah?”

The vigilante gives the seventeen year old a giddy grin. “Yeah.”

Ms. Tsukuachi’s head peeks through the teen’s door as Izuku scrambles to shove new equipment into his bag. “Reo do you know when Mid- Oh,” she pauses, spying the fifteen year old, “You do realize that you don’t have to come in through the window, correct?”

Midoriya gives her a nervous smile. “Old habits die hard I’m afraid.”

She holds out her hand for the boy to shake and Reo tenses at his side. “Do you normally climb through people’s windows?” They shake hands, the woman’s own still damp with dish water.

“Usually just my own.” His own words catch him by surprise and Reo lets out a near inaudible hiss. There’s a distant memory that surfaces at the event, Reo’s words coming back to him.

“Any questions she asks you’ll be forced to answer truthfully.”

From their position they can all hear the knock that sounds at the front door. Midoriya nearly collapses in relief when the woman turns away, attention taken elsewhere. “Oh. Reo go get the door. That must be your uncle.”

Tsukauchi’s amber eyes widen as she walks back towards the kitchen.

“Shit!” Reo hisses.

Midoriya looks over at him, startled by the outburst.

“I didn’t know he was coming.” He quickly turns to the younger boy grabbing him by the shoulders. “Whatever you do. Don’t lie.” His grip tightens. “Don’t lie about *anything* .”

Chapter End Notes

Hello :) I woke up an hour ago, edited this chapter and now I am here and you have read it!
Thank you for reading! I hope you enjoyed it! And thank you again to DogiCrimson for the fanart I may or may not have actually screamed and shown everyone I know sikhjdhfakjslfk
Until next week!

Solar Flare

Chapter Summary

It's all fun and games until shit hits the fan.

Chapter Notes

TW:// Brief Mentions of Suicide

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Whatever you do. Don’t lie.” His grip tightens. “Don’t lie about *anything* . If you don’t know what to say then let me answer.” Their eyes lock and there’s just something so desperate and fearful that flares through them, begging for the younger boy to understand.

Izuku can only nod in response, shocked by the way the teen was reacting. Reo searches his eyes for something. Whatever he sees there must satisfy him because he gives the green-haired boy’s shoulders one last squeeze before he drops his hold and steps out of his room.

Midoriya tails Tsukauchi through the apartment, nerves rising after Reo’s vague warning. *Is this his mom’s brother? His mom’s quirk forces you to tell the truth I wonder if his uncle’s is similar?* Izuku eyes the seventeen year old warily as they get closer to the front door. *Is that why he told me not to lie? Will something happen if I do? Will it activate something?*

Reo glances behind him quickly, another silent warning in his amber eyes before they reach the front door and the boy pulls it open. “Oji-san! Mom just told me you were coming.”

“She always forgets to mention me to you.” The man is blocked by Tsukauchi’s figure, but his voice sends something slithering at the back of the boy’s mind. There’s a soft laugh, “Sometimes I think that’s her actual quirk.” A hand ruffles the boy’s black hair as Reo slides to the side, letting the man through the door as he steps out of his shoes. “Oji-san, this is my friend Midoriya Izuku. Midoriya this is my uncle Naomasa.”

The green eyed boy lets out a startled choking sound. “Detective Tsukauchi.”

“Midoriya-san.” The man looks just as startled to see the boy there as

Izuku does. “I’ll be honest, this is the last place I would’ve expected to see you again.”

It’d been over a month since the detective had shown up at their dojo asking questions about his vigilante persona. *Wait.* Sweat beads along the boy’s brow. *Did I lie during that? I’m sure I did. Can he tell when I lie?* He sends Reo a worried glance. *Is that his quirk? Is that why you told me not to lie?*

“I can certainly say the same,” he manages, choking the words out with a nervous smile, hoping the fear does show in his eyes.

Reo looks between the two surprised. He doesn’t ask anything, but the boy’s question is obvious enough.

“We um… We met at my dojo a few weeks ago.”

Naomasa nods. “He made quite the entrance.”

Midoriya flushes. “I assume it wasn’t the… best first impression.”

The man chuckles. “It certainly made you memorable.”

Being memorable is a bad thing. But, it’s been a month and I haven’t been arrested yet, so whatever his quirk is it must not have tipped him off to me being Piper. I could still be a suspect though. Reo sends him a worried glance from the corner of his eyes. *But, he doesn’t seem like someone who just walked in and saw a vigilante suspect standing in his sister’s house.*

“Well!” The seventeen year old says loudly, clearing the previous conversation. “That makes introductions easy. Now I think mom should be just about done cooking! So, why don’t we head in?”

“Someone’s excited,” Naomasa says chuckling, “Did your mom make Obaasan’s hayashi rice?”

Reo winks, shooting the man a set of finger guns. “That would be correct!”

If Midoriya wasn’t busy swallowing back his nerves he’d have been swallowing back laughter at the boy’s showy display he was putting on. The seventeen year old glances at Izuku, worried as he leads the older man into the kitchen.

“Mom! Uncle Naomasa is here!” The detective shoos Reo towards his

own seat as he sits down.

Misaki sets down a large bowl of rice next to the pot with the mixture of hashed beef. “Makato called and said she wasn’t coming so it’s just us again.”

Midoriya’s nerves are slowly unwinding. *If I think about it logically, if he even so much as suspected me after that first meeting then he wouldn’t be acting so relaxed right now.* Izuku takes a seat next to his friend, only giving the teen a subtle nod when he mouths a, “you okay?” at him. And, it’s true. At least for now.

“So, Reo introduced you to Midoriya-kun then?” The woman asks as they all fill their plates.

Naomasa makes a noise of agreement as he takes a helping of rice, “We’ve actually met before during an investigation.”

The woman’s brow rises, passing the beef hash ladle to her son. “I hope it wasn’t because he was caught climbing through a window?”

Midoriya splutters, faces flushing a beet red as he looks up at the woman wide eyed. She only grins at him mischievously. *There was never any doubt that she and Reo were related, but this dissolves any and all arguments one could ever have against it.*

When his friend looks over at him he wears a similar grin, though his is much more strained. Reo’s mother is leading the conversation into dangerous territory.

Naomasa looks around the table, confused. “Am I missing something?”

“Midoriya is the friend you caught sneaking out of Reo’s window.”

The detective pauses mid bites, looking between the two boys. “Oh,” the noise sounds startled. “So, did you know I was Reo’s uncle when we met at your dojo then?”

This is one thing I certainly don’t have to lie about. “I thought you might be related when Officer Fujimori introduced you, but that was only because of your name.”

Naomasa hums in response, nodding along. “So, how did you two meet anyway? You two are a few years apart, aren't you? Fujimori-san said you were only fifteen Midoriya-kun.” Both adults look between the two of them. “Did you meet at school?”

In any other situation such a lie would be an easy out. All you would've had to do was agree. *"We met at school"* is easy enough to pass off and people don't question it too much. But, at the moment they were sitting across from two human lie detectors. One of which was only on a touch activated basis, but the other, the more dangerous of the two, had unknown activation parameters.

Midoriya takes a sip of water, signalling that Tsukauchi should be the one to answer for them.

Reo laughs, scratching at the back of his head. "He just kind of fell out of the sky!"

Izuku sputters, choking on his drink.

"Are you okay Midoriya-kun?"

Izuku coughs, setting his drink down as Tsukauchi pats his back a few times. "I'm fine," he wheezes, trying to catch his breath, "Sorry."

"It took a few weeks to get to know each other," Reo says, taking the spotlight off the younger boy as he tries to steer the conversation into safer waters, "But, we eventually became good friends."

"So, how long have you known each other then?" Misaki asks, taking a bite of her food.

"About… two and a half months now?" Tsukauchi replies, looking towards Midoriya for confirmation. He only nods in agreement, taking another sip of water to help him recover.

After that they fall into casual conversation between their bites of food. Things about what school he goes to and a few things about Muay Thai.

"Midoriya, have you ever participated in any Martial arts competitions?" Naomasa looks genuinely curious.

The fifteen year old looks up from his bite of rice. "No, sir. I joined the dojo to teach me how to fight so I could become a hero. I never saw the point in pointlessly hurting someone for a medal."

"So I take it you applied for a hero school then?" Misaki asks, squeezing into the conversation.

Reo shoots him a worried glance, the boy knows it's a touchy subject,

knows it's a painful topic for his friend.

Midoriya's lips pull into a sad smile at the question. "Yeah. I did." Izuku takes another bite of food, preventing the man from directing any follow up questions as they all go back to eating.

Naomasa is mid bite when his phone buzzes, he pauses at the noise. "Sorry." He slips a phone from his pocket, looking at the screen as he stands up. "This is work, just give me a moment." The detective slips down the hall, his words inaudible over the clinking of silverware against porcelain. He comes back a few moments later, a harried look on his face and the edges of his lips tilted down. "Sorry everyone I'm afraid I'll have to leave early."

Reo's mom looks up from her food, slightly vexed. "You haven't even finished eating."

"It's Piper," he replies, shoving his phone back into his pocket, "Evidently someone just spotted him a few blocks from here."

Midoriya stills. Rice halfway into his mouth. *But, I've been here for the past half hour?* He and Reo share a worried glance as the man swipes his keys off the table.

Misaki huffs, "Makato couldn't make it and now here you are leaving thirty minutes in."

"You know I'm the lead detective on the Piper case, I've got to be there. I'll make it up to you though. I'll drag Makato here myself next time if I have to."

Misaki's scowl softens. "You better. I'm going to hold you to that Mr. Detective."

Izuku had managed to slowly calm himself down throughout their dinner, no longer as worried about being caught lying about something important. But now, Midoriya freezes, heart spluttering in his chest. *His case? What the hell is he talking about? Is that why he was at the dojo? Because Piper his case?* Midoriya's eyes zip towards Reo, something… *sour* welling in his chest, lapping at the base of his sun, threatening to extinguish its flames. He calmly takes another bite of beef, chopsticks trembling ever so slightly between his fingers.

The meat tastes like rot in his mouth. He feels like throwing up.

Naomasa nods in the boys' direction. "It was nice seeing you again

Midoriya-kun.”

Izuku swallows food bite, nodding absently. “You too Detective.”

After the man leaves the three finish eating in relative silence. Misaki leaving shortly after in order to catch a night shift at the hospital, the two boys left to clean up the remnants of dinner.

They wash dishes quietly, Reo sending his friend worried glances thought out the entire ordeal until he finally speaks. “Midoriya, are you okay? You seem kind of out of i–”

He cuts the teen off, gently setting the plate in his hands down. “Why?” The word is quiet, a raw, barely there whisper.

“Why?” Reo repeats, confused. “Why what?”

Midoriya tries to keep his voice down, but his sun *hurts* . “Why didn’t you tell me your *uncle* was the Detective trying to hunt me down!” Midoriya hisses, eyes blown wide with fear and adrenaline and… *betrayal* . He can’t help the tears that burn at the corners of his eyes, the pressure from trying to hold them back bringing with it a headache.

Tsukuachi’s eyes widen with sudden realization. “Midoriya let me explain.” There’s hurt in the teen’s voice but the vigilante can’t hear it over the sound of crackling flame. The sun in his chest flares with anger, flames licking up the sides of his ribcage. It blackens his bones and sizzles his flesh, fat popping like hot oil as his insides are scorched. Smoke fills his lungs and his throat and his head, making it hard to breath, hard to think. Izuku turns, not letting the other boy finish. He walks from the room and back into Tsukuachi’s room, grabbing his bag from the floor and striding towards the window as Reo calls for him to come back. Tsukauchi reaches out a hand, gently taking hold of the younger boy’s forearm. But, Midoriya jerks himself away, throwing up the window and slipping out.

Reo doesn’t try to follow him.

Izuku knows he should be worried, *this was a ploy. This entire friendship was a ploy* . He should be worried because Tsukauchi *knows* that he’s Piper, and he knows his name, his face, knows who is *mother* is. He should be worried that this is where his vigilantism would end, where is *life* would end. But, all he can think of is the betrayal burning hot in his chest. The flames crackle with the voice of his inner demon.

He grabs his shoes and his pipe from the fire escape and climbs the ladder to the roof up, not bothering to tug his sneakers back on.

"How did you expect anything else? Who would be friends with

someone as useless as you?"

His tears burn like acid in his eyes.

"You, who is so easily manipulated.

You, who cannot think for himself. You, who is no

more useful than a parasite."

He makes it to the roof, looking out over this small part of Musutafu through blurred eyes.

"How did you fool yourself into thinking that

you could save the world?"

Bakugou's words comes back to him then, the demon taking up a twisted version of the blond's voice.

"Do the world a favor and rid it of your uselessness.

Just take a swan dive from the roof."

The buildings along the skyline before him are silhouetted by the coming of twilight. The distant chatter of people and cars and *life* barely able to reach his ears from here. His tears extinguish the rampaging flames of his sun, his anger suffocating beneath a wave of *hurt.* His chest cavity floods with pain and countless indescribable emotions that slosh up the sides of his charred rib cage. It's hard to breathe again, lungs unable to expand. It's hard in a way that he'd become all too familiar with growing up.

Midoriya chokes back a sob, pressing a hand over his mouth. *I can't do this now.*

He shakes the voices off as best he can, still drowning under his emotions, but trying the best he can to collect himself as he swipes at his eyes. He sets his bag down to pull out his vigilante gear and quickly changes, trying to redirect his thoughts. It's not quite dark yet, he'd been expecting to stay at Reo's for longer, but…

His chest flares, heart cracking like sun baked clay.

Tsukauchi's belt sits on top of all his other gear and his hands shake when he picks it up. He takes in an unsteady breath before setting it to the side and pulling everything else out, he'd save that for last.

After he pulls his gloves on, Midoriya glances down at the belt, conflicted. He can't deny that it'd be useful in emergency situations, but he also can't rule out the possibility that the grenades are rigged or being tracked.

Midoriya thinks that, at the very least, Tsukauchi wouldn't want to see him hurt. *If the police show up at any point all I have to do is ditch the belt.* His fingers tremble as he goes to buckle it around his waist.

He's high on a cocktail of pain and betrayal and doing a patrol right now feels dangerous, feels like he's about to drive a motorcycle under the influence only the bike he's on is named "Piper". It's a poor decision, but his high strung nerves demand for a way to release their pent up energy. His sun sings with betrayal, calling for the enactment of justice in the only way he knows how.

But, he finds that there's no way for him to enact it. For the first time, when his mind desperately cries for the arrival of a villain, none show up. There's no one to save, no one to protect, no one to help.

"The world doesn't need you. It never needed you."

He's desperate to shut the voice up, desperate to prove it wrong. He curses, wildly swinging his pipe at an alley wall. The loud clang it sends out serving as a warning bell, signaling his rising emotions.

Tears of frustration curl at the corners of his eyes as he crouches. He sends a hand out to steady himself again the wall, gloved finger tips digging into the brickwork.

He was right about the motorcycle analogy.

Tears threaten to slip down his cheeks and he's barely suppressing the urge to cry when there's a voice from the other end of the alley.

"Usually I wouldn't come out this far, but the police seemed pretty desperate to catch you," the owner of the voice sounds tired, bored even.

Midoriya whips himself up into a defensive position. It's long past

dark now, several hours having already passed since he'd left Reo's apartment.

"They called me out to this area to keep a look out for you." The man's stance looks casual, but the vigilante can see the way his muscles are tensed, body ready to move at a moment's notice. "I'll be honest though. I didn't expect I'd actually end up finding you."

He wants to swipe at the tears hanging in his eyes, but doing so would let the man know he'd been crying. *He might take it as a sign of weakness.*

The man's eyes glow red behind the slits of the goggles he wears and his hair floats like it's defying gravity. Piper's eyes widen in realization. *It's Eraserhead.*

During his time at the dojo, Midoriya had done his research on heroes who fought with non offensive quirks. At the time there had been a list almost as long as the offensive type, but none had stood out to him so much as the one that stands before him.

Despite having an amazing quirk, Eraserhead essentially fought quirkless and that alone had been enough to awe the boy. It had always given him hope for his own future as a hero.

They stand before each other now, two sides of the same coin, but both on opposite sides of the jail cell Midoriya can suddenly see looming in his future.

While the hero's quirk is useless on him it in no way puts the man at a disadvantage. *I need to get out of here, he has more experience fighting than I do. A fight with him would be stilted in his favor.*

The hero's hands wrap around his capture weapon, almost as if he can hear the boy's inner thoughts.

Midoriya curses internally, *this is literally the worst day I've had since that damned letter.* His heart wrenches, mind whirling with past memories and possible escape plans. "I could've been in one of your classes."

The words surprise both parties, the vigilante's pied eyes widening as the hero raises a brow.

Izuku curses. "Seriously, how much does fate have to hate me for it to end up like this," the vigilante murmurs quietly, just loud enough for

the hero to hear. “I was hoping we’d meet in a more *civil* setting.” His eyes burn again, his free hand clenching in a fist as his side. *I seriously need to get out of here. I don’t stand a chance against him .*

“Come with me and we can do that.”

Piper glances up, a sad smile pulling at his lips. “You know I can’t do that Eraserhead.”

The hero sighs, “It was worth a try at least.” Without any further warning the man sends his capture weapon out. Midoriya doesn’t have enough time to dodge it, instead bringing up his pipe to take the brunt of the attack. It loops around his weapon, threatening to rip it from his grasp. The vigilante tightens his grip, the gecko like palms of the gloves he’d gotten from Giran helping him keep his hold.

Eraserhead uses the opportunity to get in closer, but doing so also shortens the distance between their weapons. The hold on Piper’s staff slackens, giving the vigilante ample time to send the free end of the staff in a sweeping arc, flinging the capture weapon off and keeping the hero at bay.

Midoriya pants quietly, heart racing in his chest as he desperately attempts to analyze the situation. *He’s not just a hero. He has students my age.* “It-It wasn’t long ago that I dreamed of being one of your students,” something in his chest twists, his rejection letter flashing in the back of his mind. “And yet,” his voice cracks ever so slightly, a cocktail of fear and hurt rising to a boil between his ribs. *I need to get his eyes off me.* The boy pauses suddenly, choking on his next words. *The smoke bombs.* He makes eye contact with the man, red and green meeting crimson. “Dreaming got me nowhere.” It’s a harsh statement for him, so unlike his usual self.

Unseen, just outside the hero’s peripheral, the boy fiddles with one of the smoke bombs at his hip, thankful beyond belief that he’d decided on wearing the belt. He keeps talking, maintaining the man’s attention on his face. “The world’s a cruel place as I’m sure you’ve realized,” the boy says, “And, it crushed those dreams long before they’d even been given a chance,” there’s a pause, “I’d never realized how fragile dreams were.” He’d been unstable the long before the man had walked into the alley and the words he's saying now are dredging up memories he’d rather forget. Memories of the letter resurfaces, the emotions from that day, the disappointment and pain, welling up to mix with his already confusing slew of emotions. They flood is chest cavity, constricting his heart.

There's just so much *pain.*

"It's the world we live in, we have to deal with it."

Eraserhead can see the vigilante's shoulder tense at his words. "You're right, and this… this is how I chose to deal with it. There are too many people that are born with the right heart, but not the necessary quirk, just as there are too many people born with the right quirk and the wrong heart."

He clenches his jaw, features twisting and Aizawa can see the *hurt* look that's painted in the vigilante's polychrome eyes, can see the open wound where the kid's heart should be.

"I just want to save people." There's a small pop and green smoke fills the alley, stinging the hero's eyes and cutting off his line of sight. Aizawa curses, blindly whipping out his capture weapon into the haze in hopes of it latching onto the boy. It doesn't. And, by the time the wind clears the smoke enough to for him to see, the vigilante is already gone. The only evidence he'd even been there the afterimage of their pained expression painted across the backs of the hero's eyelids.

"Shit."

Naomasa pinches at the bridge of his nose. "So after going through all of that it was a false sighting?"

Sansa grimaces. "Yes sir. Kono Yori is a plumbing apprentice with a company called Toshin Plumbing. A teen got excited when they saw him carrying a piece of pipe into an apartment building and made the call."

The detective sighs, running a hand through his hair as he begins pacing. "Our Muay Thai lead didn't pan out as we'd hoped. Out of *all* the people we ended up talking to, 47 matched Piper's physique, 29 had been involved in spontaneous vigilantism cases, and 23 either lied or had no sound alibi for their whereabouts on the 30th."

"Before that we had zero suspects though," Sansa reminds him, "It could've been anyone in the city at that point."

Naomasa stops next to the officer, taking in a deep breath. "You're right. It's not ideal but it's still something. We're getting closer." In his

pocket his phone buzzes, answering it as he moves back towards his vehicle. “Musutafu Police, Quirk crimes division, Detective Tsukauchi speaking.”

“Detective, you’re playing lead on the Pied Piper case, correct?”

Naomasa pulls the phone away from his ear for a moment, checking the caller ID. “Eraserhead. I heard they’d sent you over to help, and yes I’m playing lead.”

“Good. I just ran into Piper and I’ve got some things I'm sure you’d like to hear.”

Before you leave! My friend made art for this chapter!! Go leave it some love!!!! <333

trashfortodo

Chapter End Notes

> Hello! If you are currently reading this chapter that means that Avery is the best person in the universe because as of today I am currently in the middle of the ocean without internet and they have uploaded everything for me!!
> So if you're reading this say thank you to Avery!! They're the best! They pre-read all my chapters for me AND they're also the ones who made art for this chapter!!!!! So go check out their twitter @trashfortodo!! <3
>
> I hope you all enjoyed this week's chapter I'll be back on land next week so I'll see you all then! Until next time!

Binary Star System

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Thursday 3:46 AM

Wikipedia

Midoriya?

Please let me explain

Thursday 4:27 AM

Wikipedia

Did you get home safe?

Thursday 8:53 AM

Wikipedia

I don’t know if you’re awake yet or not but...

I really need to talk to you

Thursday 3:02 PM

Wikipedia

I can see that you’re reading these

Can I call you?

Thursday 7:24 PM

Wikipedia

Be safe on your patrol tonight

Friday 3:31 AM

Wikipedia

Did everything go okay?

Midoriya throws himself into his vigilante work, not letting Tsukauchi's betrayal slow him down.

While he himself is drowning underneath his broiling emotions he reminds himself that he's not the only one and that, *there are people to save.* He reminds himself that he has more obstacles to overcome, more distance cover, more peers to pass.

So, he starts with an unusual missing person's case, it's something difficult to keep his attention. Midoriya slides the clothes in his closet to the side, studying the spread of information laid out before him. It wasn't much at the moment, just an incomplete police report, few social media posts, and the occasional 'word on the street' sticky note he's put up. The boy had only started gathering information on the case a few weeks before the… other night.

But, despite how little he had, one thing was certain.

His eyes roam the scattered pages tapped to his wall. It was a group, and the man he was looking for wasn't the only one to have disappeared. In recent years the role of the yakuza had become a fickle thing after the ascent of heroes and villains. Their place had been taken with groups and individuals far more sinister than themselves. But, looking at the evidence the fifteen year old has now, he understands that not all groups had faded out as had been originally thought.

Friday 11:24 AM

Wikipedia

I understand that you need time but

Please just let me know that your safe

It's really not what you're thinking

Just give me a chance to explain

Name: Kogane Gizō

Age: thirty-four

Quirk: Midas Touch

Missing Since: June 21st

Case Status: Suspended

He was most likely taken for his quirk. Izuku uses his pen to scratch at a spot on the back of his head. *So, we're looking for a group that needs funding of some sort… Or just someone who's greedy.*

Izuku places a sticky note next to the page of the man's 'missing' poster with some additional information.

The sister made a public post about finding his apartment broken into, but said nothing had been taken. So, it can be assumed that he didn't just leave, but his case was suspended after only a few days…. It's a group with a bit of influence then.

But, if he really was taken for his quirk then whatever their reason is there should be a trail of some sorts. I doubt they'd just horde it the money he'd bring in, they want it for something. So… Midoriya steps backwards, perching himself on the edge of his bed as he takes in his makeshift theory board. *I just need to find out where they're spending it all.*

On his nightstand his phone buzzes with a new text notification.

He doesn't spare it a glance.

Maybe Giran will know something?

Saturday 3:59 AM

Wikipedia

You okay?

Midoriya sighs, flipping open the phone the broker had given him. It still only has one contact. He dials the man's number, waiting for him to pick up.

Giran answers before the second ring. "Piper, I'm surprised," he

drawls, “Don’t tell me you’re in need of new gear already?”

“No, no.” The vigilante shakes his head. “No new gear yet.”

The man lets out a low hum, “Then, to what do I owe the pleasure?”

“You’re a broker Giran,” Midoriya replies instead of answering, “I was wondering if you deal in information as well.” The vigilante already knows the answer to the question, but he needs to hear from villain as well.

There’s a pause where neither of them speak, the only sound the smoky exhale that Giran lets out on the other side of the line. “You have to understand that for someone of your nature,” the man drawls, “That my answer is going to vary depending on what it is you’re asking for.”

Midoriya paces back towards his closet, pushing his clothes further to the side. “Kogane Gizō. He has a quirk that turns anything he touches for an extended period of time into gold. He’s been missing for seven weeks. I’ve got info that points to a yakuza group being responsible, so I’m looking for a large influx of funds for an organization with enough influence and connections to pull something like this off.”

Giran leans back quietly in his chair. “You’ll have to give me some time for something like that. But, you realize that if I find that there is no conflict of interest…” The man trails off with a silent grin.

The vigilante huffs a laugh, “Rest assured, if you’re willing to share the information then I’ve got the money for it.”

Sunday 2:16 AM

Wikipedia

So I thought of some more gear I could make for you

I know you were complaining about that broker guy

not getting you weapons

I was thinking about something electrified?

But I don’t know if that’s something you’d want

Midoriya peels off is vigilante uniform, tucking everything away where his mom won't find it. He perches himself on the edge of his bed, staring into his closet. From here he can study all the information he's gathered on Kogane Gizō. He'd gone to talk to the sister that afternoon during his first patrol. She'd been surprisingly helpful, he could tell she was desperate to find her brother. It was bordering on two months that he'd been missing and as far as he could tell the police hadn't done anything to find him since day three. Midoriya sighs, glancing down and the small gash on his arm. It wasn't very big and it was only deep enough to bleed, but a few centimeters over and woman's quirk could've caused some actual damage. "I should really be more careful," he murmurs, falling back into his bed to study the ceiling. "I don't know if I'd trust Giran to patch me up."

Sunday 7:05 AM

Wikipedia

I couldn't sleep at all last night

Hope you slept better than me

Sunday 12:45 PM

Wikipedia

I saw an article about you earlier I

thought it was pretty funny if you want

me to link it to you

"Piper!" Giran drawls, "Good news for you my friend. I've got a name for you."

The vigilante pushes himself up, phone pressed to his ear as he checks the restraints on his latest capture. "Oh?"

"Five hundred thousand yen."

Midoriya curses internally, swiping at his brow. He'd talked big game

the other day, but in reality his earlier shopping spree had taken a large chunk from his spending money. “That’s quite the amount for just a name Giran. ” It’d take him a bit to rebuild the funds for it.

“I had to call in quite a few favors for this,” Giran says, leaning back in his desk chair with a grin. “I’m running a business here kid, gotta make a living somehow.”

The vigilante sighes, resisting the urge to run a hand through his hair as he starts pacing. “It’ll take a few days then. Will you be willing to wait?”

“For five hundred grand?” He surmises, a cheshire smile gracing the broker’s lips. “Of course.”

Monday 9:38 AM

Wikipedia

Morning

Monday 6:37 PM

Wikipedia

How was patrol?

Piper glances down at the man in disbelief. “Literally *why* do you need this much money on you? There’s at least two hundred thousand yen here.”

“Business is booming, what can I say?” the drug dealer says with a nervous laugh. “How about this. *You* take the money, and in return you let me go.”

The vigilante’s brow rises. “Or I take the money and let the police deal with you and all of the drug paraphernalia on your person.”

The man spits a few curses, his fear rising as he tugs at his restraints. “How are you any better than me! Stealing all my hard earned money!”

The vigilante scowls. “Money that you earned by preying on who

knows how many people with drug addiction. That stuff you have on you isn't something to play with. It's highly addictive and ruins peoples' *lives* ," Midoriya spits, brows snapping together as he drops into a crouch in front of the man. "But *this* ?" He hisses, waving the wad of cash in his hands, "What *I'm* doing? This is going to help me solve a missing persons case, it's going to help *save* lives, *not* destroy them."

Tuesday 3:51 AM

Wikipedia

Midoriya.

Please, say something.

Tuesday 4:23 AM

Wikipedia

Midoriya.

I want to apologize in person

But...

I doubt you'd agree to that

I hope you're still awake

I'm going to call, just…..

Please pickup

Midoriya lies in bed, staring up at his ceiling in the barely there dawn light. His phone lights up on the nightstand next to him, buzzing quietly on the wooden table. His heart squeezes in his chest.

The boy lets his eyes close as the phone rings on. He pulls his bed sheets up further up, rolling onto his side to face the wall.

Eventually the phone stops ringing.

Wednesday 2:42 AM

Wikipedia

I can't stand this anymore

I need to make sure you're okay

We're friends

I'd never lie to you about that

I just want to make sure you're safe

Please just….

Pickup

Midoriya lays in his bed, staring at his screen for a while and debating whether or not to answer the call. He lets it buzz quietly before he finally gives out and taps his thumb against the answer button.

"Hello? Midoriya?"

He doesn't reply.

"Midoriya?" There's a moment of silence on Reo's end, waiting for the boy to respond. He doesn't. "Alright, um… I guess I'll just assume that you're listening." There's a sigh on the other end of the line as Izuku puts the phone on speaker, quietly setting it down on his nightstand. "You're angry at me right?" His voice is pained. "I get that. I betrayed your trust and um… You'll... probably want to know if I knew right?" There's a long pause, "I did know."

The fire in Midoriya's chest swells and shrinks, the flames rising and falling like the tide. Angry one moment and hurt the next.

"I kept something like that from you when I shouldn't have and I'm a terrible friend for it. But, I want you to know that I *never* had the intention of telling my uncle anything about you. I never lied to you Midoriya, but…. I withheld the truth about him and that's just as bad. You trusted me and I… I broke that." Reo takes in a shaky breath on the other end of the line. "I was scared to tell you at first because we

didn't know each other very well and if I'd said anything you would've left and never came back. And then, once we got close enough, I was worried that you'd think I'd been faking everything from the start." The sound of clothes rustling filters through the speaker. "Which… you did. But... that shouldn't have been my decision to make for you. You being around me all the time like we were put you at risk, and it's not fair that you didn't know just because I was too scared to tell you. There was that time my uncle almost caught you in my room and again at dinner last week, you could've gotten caught and it would've been no one's fault but my own."

The younger boy holds his breath, rolling onto his back to stare at the shadows on his ceiling.

"I'm sorry Midoriya. I don't expect you to forgive me or anything I just… I wanted you to know that I'm still your friend and that I'm still here for you no matter what. Even if it's selfish of me to say so."

There's a moment of silence before Midoriya's voice filters through the speaker in a barely there whisper. All the pain and hurt he'd been made to feel seeping into his lungs, choking his words. "You're a genius."

Reo sucks in a sharp breath on the other end of the line, not saying anything.

"But, you're also an idiot."

The older boy lets out a quiet, pained laugh. "Yeah, I am."

"You really hurt me." Midoriya throws an arm over his eyes, pushing back tears.

Tsukauchi's voice softens, "I know."

"Don't do it again."

There's a moment of silence as Reo leans back in his seat, phone pressed to his ear. His own heart aches. "I won't."

---

r/vigilantes · Posted by u/_uselesskids two weeks ago

Pied Piper's Quirk?

162 upvotes

Okay so Pied Piper has been pretty popular for awhile now but we still don't know what his quirk is? Like there's been a lot of new footage of him recently but as far as I know we still don't have any evidence of what kind of quirk he has?

I've seen theories that relate it back to his vigilante name but honestly I don't think that's true??? So I'm wondering what everyone else thinks

.

localstonednerd - 153 points, one week ago

I was thinking about this too tbh and when looking at all the videos i was thinking that it could either be some sort of minor strength or speed enhancement?? But i mean it could always be a mental quirk? It would explain why we haven't seen any evidence of one at least. I mean there's that one hero nighteye that has foresight and i know a few famous scientists that have intelligence quirks so its not a crazy leap or anything

.

katsueiji - 38 points, one week ago

its the rats, he can control the rats

Saturday 3:10 AM

Wikipedia

GOOOOOD MORNING

Rat-Tamer

It's literally 3am

Wikipedia

Exactly

So it's morning

Anyway!

I was thinking about what we could

electrify :))

Rat-Tamer

O-okay

mildly terrified but okay

Wikipedia

so what do you think?

something with a taser option :)

OH! WHAT ABOUT A NEW STAFF

No, no something like that would be hard to balance

hmmmmm

Rat-Tamer

Couldn't you just make a taser?

Wikipedia

what would be the fun in that

that's boring

you're supposed to give me /good/ ideas

Rat-Tamer

Okay then uhhh

Escrima sticks?

I'm trying to think of something that I actually

have a decent enough understanding to be able

to use aslkjfoasdlkfj

Wikipedia

you…. want me to make you sticks?

Rat-Tamer

electrified sticks?

Wikipedia

…….

electrified sticks it is

Rat-Tamer

AND WILL YOU CHANGE MY NAME

I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE DOING NOW

I'VE SEEN THE POSTS

Wikipedia

N e v e r

It takes a few more days for Midoriya to build up the courage to actually go back to Reo's apartment, scared of being hurt again. But, he misses his friend, misses the easy conversations and the scheming and the laughing. He misses crawling through his window to talk about patrols and come up with ideas for new inventions. He misses him.

So, on Monday afternoon he tugs on his cargo pants and shoves all his other gear into his backpack once again. He waves goodbye to his teary eyed mother after telling her he's going to a friend's and heads for Reo's with his pipe shoved back down his pant's leg.

Monday 2:35 PM

Rat-Tamer

Um

What's your apartment number

Wikipedia

what

Rat-Tamer

Your apartment number

I need it

Wikipedia

6012???

why do you need it???

hello???

Monday 2:43 PM

Rat-Tamer

I'm at your front door

Reo throws open the door moments later after making a mad dash for the entryway, eyes wide. "You're at the door."

Midoriya nods, a sheepish smile on his lips. "I'm at the door."

"Why?"

"I figured I owed your mom for dinner."

It takes a while for them to fall back into their old roles, the two of them tiptoeing around each other for the better half of an hour. But, it only last for as long as it takes for one of them to crack a joke.

Midoriya pushes himself up, walking towards Tsukauchi's desks to pick up one of the blue prints sprawled across the table, studying the design in an attempt to disperse some of the tension. "A grappling hook?" He glances towards the older teen, brow raised.

Reo turns to him, humming in confirmation. "I got to watching some pre-quirk era spy movies the other day. I'm making it for you, but I'm

not quite sure what *you'd* use it for. I figured it'd come in handy at some point though." He grins softly at the younger boy. "After all there's not always a fire escape to save you."

Izuku mind takes only a moment to register the joke before he takes on a mock solemn tone, playing along, "Do not doubt their numbers. One cannot deny that I have been saved by such creations more than a few times." Midoriya starts counting off incidents on his fingers, shedding his stately facade. "At least like… Five times? Most recently with my Eraserhead encounter. Also!" Midoriya exclaims, whipping towards Reo, "The smoke was *green* ?"

Tsukauchi grins at him. "Did you like it? The other two are purple and orange. I had to resist the urge to put glitter in them so it could've been worse if my self control had been any lower than it already was."

The green haired boy huffs a laugh, setting the blueprint back down as he plops himself back on Reo's bed. "Thank you for restraining yourself. I ended up changing back into civilian clothes once I got back to street level for safety, but glitter is like a lifelong disease once it's on you." A smile blooms across Izuku's face. "Can you imagine if you'd actually done that and Eraserhead somehow managed to find me again like, "Why no, Mr. Eraserhead sir! I am not the one you are looking for! You see I just got back from a rave!""

"A rave!" Tsukauchi exclaims, laughter seeping into his voice.

"A rave!" Izuku confirms, grinning as he pushes himself up from the bed, excitement replacing any nerves he may have had before. "I somehow manage to convince him that I'm not lying and get away and I have to embrace the glitter because it just *never* goes away. "Glinting in the darkest nights! I am! Pied Piper!" Midoriya strikes a pose before whipping a finger out to point at some unseen enemy. "Watashi ga kita assholes! Step away from the young lady!"" His performance earns a round of applause and a laugh from his friend.

"I don't know. That right there seemed like it suited you rather well. Maybe I would've been doing you a favor." Reo gives him a mischievous grin that tells the fifteen year old he's rethinking his earlier decision.

Midoriya is vibrant. His viridescent eyes sparkling with a life in which they hadn't in a long while. It brings Tsukauchi some relief to see it, to see his friend back the way he used to be. And, Izuku can see the happiness, the *relief* , seeping through Reo's own eyes.

———————————

Midoriya stretches in Tsukauchi's other desk chair, scooting it back in the process as he makes to stand up.

"You leaving already?" Reo asks, casting a glance over his shoulder.

Izuku nods. "Yeah. I've got to meet up with Giran. It's for that missing persons case I told you about a few weeks ago, it turned out to be a pretty big operation so I got him to do some information gathering for me." Midoriya pats at one of the larger cargo pockets on his pants. "I've gotta go finish the exchange."

Tsukauchi turns away from their blueprints plate of food in his hands as he raises a brow. "I thought you didn't like that guy?" The teen shoves another bite of chicken into his mouth, watching his friend expectantly.

"I don't," Midoriya replies, pulling out his vigilante gear to change into. "But I ran into a dead end. I don't have the means or resources necessary to figure out who took him. I might've been able to do it without him, but it's already been two months since the guy disappeared. I can't afford to take my time on this."

Reo rolls his chair towards the door, taking his lunch with him as he goes to guard it while Midoriya changes. "Be safe then. Call the police if anything goes wrong. I'd rather you be a snitch than dead or something."

Izuku tugs the bulletproof vest over his chest, pulling his hoodie on after it. "I don't like the guy, but he doesn't seem like the type to set up the people he's working with."

"Villainous loyalty?" Reo asks, mumbling around the food in his mouth.

"Something like that," the vigilante agrees as he slips his contact in. He tugs his gloves on and buckles Reo's belt around his waist. "Alight we're good."

Tsukauchi turns around, but keeps his ear close to the door, listening for signs of his mother. "As long as you don't get hurt. I'd rather not have you show up at my window sill bleeding anymore." He shoves a bite of rice into his mouth, speaking around it, "It's nerve wracking you know." The teen gives him a chubby cheeked smirk as the vigilante crawls out the window with a huff of laughter.

“You should try being out there then. I’ve never been more nervous than that first daylight patrol, I literally thought I was going to throw up on at least three separate occasions.”

Reo rolls back towards his desk, grinning. “Only three? I nearly vomited four times just during my high school entrance exam alone.”

Midoriya tugs on his spiked boots out on the fire escape. “Sounds intense,” Izuku laughs, standing up again to grab his pipe. “Sorry to keep doing this to you, but can you hang onto my other stuff? I’ll swing by and grab it later.”

“No problem.”

The vigilante starts making his way down the stairs, pausing to call back up to his friend, “Don’t forget about my shoes at the door!” Midoriya pulls out his phone from one of the pockets on his pants, dialing the broker’s number.

“Giran,” Piper says, forgoing any other greetings, “I’m on my way to your warehouse.”

Midoriya can *hear* a wicked grin that pushes the corners of the man’s lips into a gap toothed smile. “It’ll be a pleasure doing business with you again Piper-san.”

———————————

yourquirk reblogged **rosemeadowuwu**

[Gif 1: *Pied Piper, deadpan with dark circles underneath his eyes, throwing finger guns at the camera* .]

[Gif 2: *Villain says, “I won’t let a kid beat me.” Piper proceeds to throat punch said villain* .]

[Gif 3: *Fuzzy footage of Pied Piper at the top of a building, waving at someone. Video pans to several police officers below* .]

[Gif 4: *Pied Piper, running towards a group of villains, yelling, “Watashi ga kita assholes!”*]

[Gif 5: *Teenager videoing himself, behind him, Pied Piper awkwardly throws up a peace sign as he ties up an unconscious criminal* .]

sxnbaes:

Can we be best friends *p l e a s e ?*

#vigilantes #vigilante #pied piper #we would actually be best friends #you dont understand

3,293 notes

More art from the wonderful and amazing trashfortodo !!!

Chapter End Notes

Hello! Hello! I am back from vacation and I'm so glad to be home alsdkhfjakdsfj The ocean humidity kind of ruined my computer, so I know have permanent glitch screen in the corner of the display but other than that I had a good time!
I hope you all enjoyed this chapter and make sure you check out the amazing art my friend made and leave it some love!!!!!
Until next time!

Saturn

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Giran counts through the money that Piper hands him, sly grin growing. “Have you ever heard of the Eight precepts?”

The vigilante raises a brow, interest peaked. “As in Buddhism?”

“Not even close.” Giran catches his gaze over the tops of his glasses, smile melting. “The Eight precepts of Death, they’re a yakuza organization. Their boss fell ill, so they’ve come under new management recently. A guy named Chisaki Kai, goes by Overhaul now, he and some of his higher ups are all running around wearing bird masks. They’ve been flooding the blackmarket with some new money, buying up a bunch of medical equipment.”

“For their boss?” Midoriya questions, hands clasping together as he leans forward.

Giran shakes his head. “I doubt it. They came to me two weeks ago looking to buy a centrifuge. I couldn’t get them one fast enough so they went somewhere else. I’m not sure if they’re the ones that took your guy, but they’d be one of my top suspects.”

A frown twitches at the boy’s lips. “Just one of your suspects? That means you have more than just them.”

The man’s gaze turns serious. “There are lots of dangerous people in this city kid.” Giran’s lenses flash in the overhead lighting of his office. “People I wouldn’t dare cross, people you couldn’t even hold a candle to.” Pink eyes bore into pied ones. “Don’t go throwing yourself in deep water when you don’t even know how to swim yet. You’re a grain of sand in a sea of do gooders, try not to drown with the rest of them.”

A few days later, Giran’s words come back to him, ringing a caustic note like the voice in his head.

“People I couldn’t hold a candle to, huh?” The vigilante breathes, blocking a particularly vicious blow from the villain he’s facing.

The man lets out a low grow, “You ignoring me asshole?”

“I wonder who he thinks could then,” Midoriya murmurs, slamming the end of his staff into the man’s diaphragm.

The guy stumbles back, struggling for breath. He trips over his own feet, wiping out on his ass. The man’s quirk allows him to harden his hands and arms, but as long as Piper keeps out of range of all his hits his quirk is nearly ineffective.

The villain makes to push himself up, but the vigilante gently presses the pipe against his throat, keeping him in place. “Say,” Midoriya says, directly addressing the man this time, “Do you know anything about a yakuza group called The Eight precepts of Death?”

He gulps. “The fuck are you goin’ on about?”

Izuku sighes, “So, you don’t know either, huh?” The vigilante stares him down, a half glazed look in his eye. “That’s unfortunate.”

After he calls the police, he flees to the rooftops to watch the man from a distance as several cruisers pull to a stop in front of the tied up criminal. From this far away he can’t make out any of their faces, but he recognizes Detective Tsukauchi’s distinctive form. After learning of their connection, Midoriya would never be able to unsee the similarities of Reo and the detective’s figures. He’s in a plain button up, sleeves rolled up to his elbows and the same navy tie he always wears wrapped around his collar.

“Is that the only one he owns?” Midoriya murmurs, using is hands as mock binoculars.

On the ground Naomasa turns his gaze upwards, scanning the tops of the nearby buildings. He squints into the early morning sun, hand raised to his brow in an attempt to block some of it. “It’s not even eleven yet,” the man mumbles, “How is he not exhausted? He never sleeps and that means neither do I.”

The vigilante ducks away from the edge of the roof, quickly changing out of his gear and into something he can wear at the dojo as the police get to work below. He stows his pipe and backpack on the roof of an abandoned building several blocks over, just a few rooftops away from the dojo.

Izuku rips the mask off his face, shoving it in his pocket before he pushes through the dojo's front door.

Ji-woo waits for him inside. "Midoriya, you're late."

The boy slips off his shoes at the door. "Only by a minute."

"Late, Midoriya," Ji-woo repeats.

He grins sheepishly at the woman. "Traffic was bad?"

"You walk here." The boy opens his mouth to respond again, but Chee Sensei cuts him off. "Go warm up. You're facing Gamon today so grab a staff once you're done and meet him on the second mat."

Midoriya lets out a sigh as he makes his way towards the other students already mid warmup. "Hai~"

He takes up a spot next to his sparring partner for the day. "Morning."

The older boy gives him a shy smile. "Late again Midoriya? That makes four times this month you know."

Izuku returns the smile with a cheeky one of his own. "At least I haven't missed any days. What was it that had you missing a whole week again?"

The boy lets out a quiet laugh. "Well I wasn't going to miss out on a trip to America."

Gamon Hasuki was a year older than Midoriya though Chee Sensei hadn't started teaching him how to use a bo staff until a year after Midoriya. But, the boy had taken to it easier than he had their regular Muay Thai lessons. He was shorter than anyone else their age range, even shorter than Midoriya himself. But, he wasn't one to be underestimated in the slightest.

The green-haired boy had gotten better at fighting since he'd started his vigilante work. But, even still he wasn't a match for the older boy when Gamon had a bo staff on hand.

Ji-woo waves at the two to begin sparring and Gamon immediately takes the offensive, Izuku forced to defend against his never ending onslaught of blows. Midoriya's heart rate rises, adrenaline pulsing. Hasuki's staff slaps painfully against the fifteen year old's exposed parts, the hits sure to leave blooming blue and purple bruises in their

wake.

He blocks a blow coming for his left side and another looking to slam into the back of his knees as Gamon spins, attempting to get behind the younger boy. There's a whirlwind taking over the fifteen year old's head, roaring with ways to counter Hasaki's moves. He's desperate not to let the boy land another hit, vigilante mindset swirling, the storm in his head rising to a crescendo.

Gamon's brows are furrowed in concentration, studying the other boy's every move and taking every opportunity he sees to land a hit on him.

Ji-woo watches the two from a distance. Midoriya's fighting style had changed over the last few months and the woman wasn't sure if it was an improvement or not. Professional dojos like her own didn't allow what most referred to as 'killing blows'. They were considered unsportsmanlike and strictly prohibited because of how dangerous they could be. Because of that many of her students fell out of the habit of protecting against such blows since there simply wasn't a reason for them to. But, Midoriya's style had changed in the way that he had *begun* protecting against such blows as if he expected his opponents to resort to such methods whenever the opportunity arose for it. Even now she can see how viciously the boy guards his head and other vital organs as if he's fighting not just for a sparring sessions, but for his life.

Desperation swells through him. None of Hisaki's blows are particularly damaging, but Gamon is wearing him down with smaller blows, the injuries racking up like points in a video game despite keeping himself guarded.

Midoriya feels his Muay Thai form slip, street fighting rising to fill in the gaps.

Don't get hit. Don't get hit.

Midoriya blocks a blow coming in from the right and the staves send out a wooden clack that sounds distinctly metallic in his head.

His grip shifts downward, turning into a more baseball bat like position.

Don't get hit. Don't get hit.

Midoriya's gaze drifts upward, spying an opening.

Don't get hit. Don't get hit.

He takes aim and swings for the head.

Don't get hit. Don't get hit.

He watches Gamon's eyes widen, and his own widen with it. But, it's too late to pull out of the action. Midoriya only has time to scream, "Get down!"

Gamon does, the pipe staff sailing over the older boy's head in a smooth arc. Izuku stumbles back, dropping the staff. "A-are you okay?"

Chee Sensei's voice roars over the blood in his ears. "Midoriya! What the hell was that!" Hisaki stares up at him, wide eyed.

"S-Sorry. I'm sorry. I wasn't— I wasn't thinking." Izuku's hands shake. *I almost hurt him.*

"It's–It's fine Midoriya," the boy says, standing up on shaky knees, "I'm alright."

"I could've *killed* you."

"Gamon," the black eyed woman pauses at the older boy's side, "Are you alright?"

He nods, wiping his hands off on his shorts. "Yeah. I-I'm fine."

After she's checked that her other student is okay the woman rounds on Midoriya, fiery tar boiling in her pitch eyes. She grabs him by the arm, dragging him towards her small office. It's a dingy room, dimly lit and poorly furnished.

She rounds on him once the door is closed behind them. "Why?" is the only word that comes out of her mouth.

"I–," his voice shakes, "I don't know."

Her freckles burn neon. "That's something you should know better than to even *try* Midoriya. So I want to know *why* ." His fists clench, angry at himself for letting something like that even pass through his

mind. The whole point for him becoming a vigilante was so that he could *protect* innocent people.

“I don’t have an excuse,” the boy whispers.

“I don’t *want* an excuse Midoriya,” Ji-woo snaps, “I want an explanation. Where did you even *think* to use a staff like that.”

“I just….” the boy faulers, “I got caught up in the fight, I was looking for an opening to end it. And, I…. I saw one and took it.”

“You got lucky this time.” In his head the maw opens, words slithering through his mind like vipers. They bite at every part of his exposed flesh, pumping poison into his veins. And for once, he lets them, lets the poison in, lets the self hatred surge through him like a flood. His pace slows on the race track of his life, watching as several blurred figures pass by him, jeers on their lips.

“He wasn’t even trying to kill you,” the voice hisses, fanged teeth pulling into a cheshire grin. *“I wonder what you’ll do once someone is actually trying to? Kill them before they can kill you?”* Its acidulous smile sharpens, stretching into something far more sadistic. “ *I wonder how you’d handle becoming a murderer?”*

He grinds his teeth, looking down in shame.

On the racetrack he slows to a stop.

“Midoriya, look at me.” Chee Sensei’s voice is still just as hard, but there’s a warmth to it that wasn’t there before, “Mistakes happen, you’re not the first one to get too caught up in a fight. But, this is a type of mistake that you can’t afford to make twice. Gamon is fine this time.” She takes a deep breath, freckles dimming.

“But,” Izuku whispers, biting his lip, “He almost wasn’t.”

Ji-woo’s brows unfurl. “Go home Midoriya. Take the rest of the week off. Gather yourself. I’ll see you on Monday, okay?”

He nods reluctantly. “I’m sorry.”

“I know.”

Naomasa resists the urge to run a hand through his hair as he pulls to a stop next to a familiar dojo. He hadn’t been planning on stopping by

today, but Piper had pulled him into the area and he didn't see a point in not getting it out of the way. Tsukuachi peers into the front windows. *This is where Reo's friend goes isn't it?* The detective glances down at the list in the seat next to him, reading all the names they have left to check off.

Naomasa pinches at the bridge of his nose. "I hoped Eraserhead could've given us better info. Piper saying that he could've been one of his students doesn't necessarily imply that he applied for UA, just that it's somewhere he'd want to go if given the chance." The man leans his head against his steering wheel. "But, what aspiring hero *wouldn't* go to UA if given the chance. In theory it's good info," the man mumbles, "but it doesn't necessarily get us anywhere." A sigh escapes his mouth as he pushes himself back up and pulls himself out of his patrol car.

He makes his way to the front door, pushing it open.

Ji-woo spies him from the corner of her eyes, turning towards him. "Detective Tsukauchi."

"Chee-san, sorry for dropping by unannounced. It's nice to see you again," Naomasa greets the woman, "I was hoping I could talk to two of your students, Gamon Hasuki and Midoriya Izuku. I wanted to ask them a few follow up questions."

Ji-woo's arms cross, the woman letting out a tired sigh, eyes drifting shut. She foregoes any greeting. "Gamon is here, but I already sent Midoriya home early today, he wasn't feeling well." Her lids crack open, black eyes boring into the man. "And, Detective. I understand that you're trying to do your job and this vigilante that's been running around causing you problems. But, I am also trying to do *my* job. If you want to speak to any of my students further then it needs to be *outside* of my dojo, during their free time, and with their parents' *permission*."

Naomasa eyes widen only slightly before he nods his head in understanding. "Of course. It seems I forgot myself, I got too wrapped up in trying to narrow our suspects." The man dips his head. "I'm sorry about that, I'll save the interviews for a more appropriate time and place."

"Thank you."

Midoriya trudges his way to Reo's apartment after retrieving his vigilante gear, his eyes glazed with the possibilities of what *could have* happened. His inner voice swirls, churning like molten tar. It spouts insults he'd heard many times in the past, but each one opens new wounds and rehashes old ones.

He knocks quietly on Tsukauchi's window, hesitant, for the first time, to bother him.

Reo opens the window, surprised, but nonetheless welcoming. "Midoriya," he sounds confused, "Aren't you supposed to be at your dojo?"

Instead of answering, the boy spits out the words that had been clogging his mind. "I almost killed someone."

Reo's eyes widen. "What?"

"And, it wasn't even a villain it was someone from my dojo. We were just sparring."

Tsukauchi gently guides the boy to his bed, letting him talk uninterrupted as he drags his desk chair over next to him.

He listens silently, not saying anything as he waits for the fifteen year old to finish his story. Midoriya ends it quietly, with another whispered, "I almost killed him."

Reo nods softly. "But, he's alright."

"But, I almost *killed* him Tsukauchi."

"But, you didn't."

"But, I almost *did* ," the younger boy insists.

"But, you *didn't* ," Reo's words are hard, final, "You didn't even hurt him Midoriya. It sounds to me that he did more damage to you, at least enough for you to slip into fight or flight mode like that. I mean just look at the welts on your arms dude."

Midoriya doesn't spare them a glance. "That isn't the *point.* " His brows are drawn together, eyes desperate for the older boy to understand.

Reo sighs, "You're right. That's not the point. The point is that you're trying to get me to tell you that you're a horrible person because your

teacher wouldn't."

Midoriya's eyes widen. "Wha– That's not!"

"You almost slipped up, you almost hurt someone. You're mad at yourself, but no one else is, not that Gamon guy, not your teacher. So, you turned to me because I'm the only one who knows your secret and you think that's why everyone else isn't mad at you." This time it's Reo who's desperate for the other to understand. "What happened was an *accident* Midoriya. *That's* why no one is mad at you. You've kicked up your vigilante hours since summer started. If you're so desperate to punish yourself then cut back on it."

Izuku frowns. "How is that punishment for anyone except the people I'm trying to save!"

"Just… Focus on something that doesn't involve fighting for awhile." Tsukauchi suggests, pleading with him. "Try doing some recon on the missing persons case you've been working on and *stop* with the short morning patrols before you go to the dojo. That's probably one of the reasons this whole ordeal even happened."

Midoriya quiets.

"Your mind is stuck on 'vigilante', right? So, all we have to do is get you out of it." Tsukachi glances around the room, back at his desk. "Uh, this may or may not help. But, either way it'll get you out of your head. And, who knows! Maybe these escrima sticks I made will help. I finished them by the way." Reo grins at the younger boy. "They're not something you use at the dojo right?"

Midoriya nods reluctantly. "Yeah. I only learned some of the basics from one of Chee Sensei's friends who was visiting the dojo awhile back. They seemed interesting so I studied how to use them on youtube for a few months before I started the whole vigilante thing."

Reo raises a brow. "You learned how to use them through *youtube* ?"

"The stances and stuff were nothing new. I just needed to learn how to wield them effectively."

Tskuachi's grin widens, swiping up the two identical weapons off his desk to hand to the boy. "Careful, people might think you're bragging."

"I-I wasn't!" The vigilante splutters, taken off guard.

The black haired boy sports a mischievous smile. “I know Midoriya.”

Izuku huffs, struggling to hold back a smile of his own through his mock indignation as he carefully takes the weapons, studyinging them in fascination. “How did you finish these already?”

“It’s summer. I could literally make anything in a few days if I put my mind to it. Anyway, they each have a button on their handles, easy to access, but difficult enough to push to where you won’t do it on accident.” Reo spins in his seat, turning back towards his work desks to push a few things to the side as the fifteen year old finds one of the buttons Tsukauchi had mentioned and presses it.

Midoriya curses, immediately dropping the one in his left hand, fingers spasming. Laughter seeps into his voice, “It shocked me!”

Reo turns, an unsurprised smirk on his lips. “Of course you would have already managed to electrocute yourself. Now, if you’ll let me finish…. pressing one button will activate both sticks as long as they’re us to sixty feet from each other. So, you probably had one of them by the wrong end. I noticed when I first looked at your vigilante gloves it seemed like the palms were coated in a type of synthetic rubber to help with grip. Which means something like that shouldn’t be a problem for you as long as you have them on. But, just in case I covered the lower quarter of the sticks in rubber grips to prevent you from electrocuting yourself if you don't have your gloves on for some reason. And, there’s a switch on the bottom of them to deactivate the two for one feature if you want.”

Midoriya carefully picks up the dropped stick, grabbing it by the rubber coated end this time.

“Each shock has about the same voltage as a police taser. Because of that I implemented a safety feature, usually if you had the link activated and touched one person with both sticks at the same time then it would be like getting hit with two police tasers which can be risky business. But, with this if the link is active then they’ll only send out half the volts from each if they’re closer than five feet from each other, so a total of 1,200 volts if you get hit with both. Keep in mind that because of that there’s only enough juice in them for four full shots each, or eight half shots. After that they’ll just act as regular escrima sticks until you recharge them”

Midoriya perches himself on the edge of the teen’s bed, completely rapt.

“If the link is active then there’s usually a three second signal delay between pressing one button and the other stick going off. And, that delay can fluctuate up to fifteen seconds depending on how far apart they are.”

The fifteen year old sets the weapons aside in favor of taking the small box that Reo hands him.

“This is the charger. I tried to make it as inconspicuous and as easy to use as possible, so all you have to do is put them in and leave them and they should be fully charged within twenty-four minutes. So, approximately one full charge every six minutes. The box is also able to generate its own electricity so no plugins required.”

Midoriya’s eyes twinkle in awe. “You really thought of everything, huh?”

Tsukauchi offers him a smile. “If I don’t then someone else will and we can’t have that happening now can we?”

“Thanks…” Midoriya ventures, “For taking my mind off of everything. You were right.”

Reo huffs. “Of course I was right.”

The phrase ‘that’s what friends are for’ comes to the boy’s mind and seems to go without saying.

On the race track Midoriya takes a step forward, and another. He picks the pace, jogging, running, sprinting. Until he’s back to the pace he’d once held. The sun in his chest burns bright, radiant as ever before.

But, in his head the maw opens, hissing in his ear.

“It’s not like you would know the answer to that question.

You’re so worthless that even the ones you had changed their minds,

so worthless that even your father abandoned you.”

“He didn’t abandon me,” Midoriya hisses back, scowl falling into place.

Tsukauchi turns back to him, confused. “What?”

Izuku’s eyes widen, stammering out a response. “N-nothing! Just

talking to myself!” He manages an awkwardly quiet laugh that does nothing to settle the worry that’s taken up residence in Reo’s amber gaze.

_____-

I made a lot of art for this chapter so I hope you all enjoy it!

1 - 2 - 3

Chapter End Notes

> Hope you all enjoyed this chapter! This is the one I wrote while at sea and ruined my laptop for lmaookjasdhfjkjf so I hope it's worth it! See you next week!

Horologium

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Reo had told him to cut down on his vigilante hours, but even several weeks after summer break had ended he finds it hard to actually put the suggestion into effect. He starts storing his vigilante gear inside an abandoned warehouse several blocks away from his school on the days he doesn't go to the dojo, squeezing in a short patrol before he heads home. And, on the weekends he continues doing his daytime rounds.

It's one such weekend that he runs into one of the worst heroes he can think to run into. It's partly his own fault. The vigilante had strayed far too close to one of the most populated parts of Musutafu while trying to track down a lead on his Kogane case.

He'd only been tailing the guy, hoping he'd eventually lead the boy back to wherever it was the Eight Precepts were hiding. He watches the man slip out the end of an alley and into a crowded street, the vigilante rushing to follow, afraid he'd lose sight of him.

But, when Midoriya speeds out the end of the alley, eyes already roaming the sidewalk, he slams face first into a flaming chest.

He freezes up at first, scared he'd run directly into his target, but the bulking chest he backs away from is nothing like the thin, rat like man he'd been following. The vigilante relaxes somewhat, rubbing gently at his nose. "Sorry about that, wasn't watching wear I was going." He steps back, looking around again for where the guy had disappeared to.

He spares the man he'd run into a glance, immediately tensing.

The boy locks up in horror. *I'm dead. I'm going to jail. This is how it ends.*

The flame hero, Endeavor, glares down at him, the vigilante wilting beneath his gaze as he stumbles back. The boy shrivels like a spring flower underneath the summer sun at the look the hero sends him.

There's no way out for him here, no fire escape to save him, no smoke thick enough to hide him. There's no gun for him to steal, no

emotional weaknesses for him to play off of, there's only icy blue eyes and fire hot enough to carbonize cells.

Endeavor takes a step forward and Midoriya has to resist the sudden urge to throw his hands up and surrender right then and there. But, the step the hero takes forwards has him brushing right past the vigilante. There's a boy his age that follows with heterochromatic hair and eyes, half of which match that of Endeavor's. He gives the vigilante a brief nod of acknowledgement before he too moves past him, making to follow his father's looming form.

Piper is left to merely stare after them in awe.

The hero's voice flows back to the vigilante over the gathering crowd. "Did you the weapon in his hands?"

The teen doesn't respond verbally, merely gives him a small nod.

"There are far too many heroes in this new generation that rely on support gear like that to help them take down villains." The hero peers down at his youngest from the corner of his cerulean eyes. "The quirks inside you are my legacy. With them it will be easy for you to surpass everyone else."

Midoriya turns his head to follow the duo's progress, their conversation just audible over the murmuring crowd.

A hero? Izuku's mouth gapes open, eyes widening. *He thinks I'm a hero?*

Todoroki glance around him, ignoring his father's words in favor of watching the crowd. He can see that several people have their phones out. And, at first Shouto doesn't notice anything wrong with the situation.

It wasn't the first time they'd run into a hero while his father dragged him around on his patrols, and it certainly wasn't the first time Endeavor had bad mouthed other heroes to him.

But, it was strange. He could see a few people in the crowd holding back hushed laughter, and he realizes that all the cameras he'd spied hadn't actually been pointed at his father.

Todoroki pauses, turning to look back at the hero they'd passed.

Perhaps it's a new up and coming hero? They look pretty young.

The lower half of his face is still covered, but Shouto can tell from the crinkle of his shining eyes that he wears a kind of star struck smile.

From the corner of his vision Todoroki can see a kid his age filming the three of them, his phone whipping back and forth between the hooded figure and his father. The teen seems excited, eyes glinting like he knows a secret that no one else is privy to, like he's watching the beginning of some epic battle royal.

Todoroki locks gazes with the hooded figure, eyes widening in surprise when he catches the other winking at him.

Shouto can see the new found giddy mischief gleaming in his red and green eyes before he blows a mock kiss at the red and white haired teen.

"Shouto," Endeavor's voice draws him out of his shock as he turns towards the man. "Keep up." The hero's looming frame marches on as Todoroki glances back at the hoodie figure.

But, when he checks again the guy is gone, disappearing as quickly as he'd come.

A hushed whisper makes its way through a small part of the crowd that'd seen. He frowns, turning back to continue following his father.

From the murmuring of the people around him, Todoroki picks up on the conversation between two girls.

"They both have different colored eyes, that's just too cute I'm screaming."

"Forget about their eyes! A vigilante and Endeavor's son? That's some wattpad romance right there."

He jerks his head back to where he'd last seen the boy. "Vigilante?" Shouto murmurs the word quietly to himself, staring after his afterimage.

"I said keep up!"

Midoriya spins in circles in Reo's desk chair, watching the room's colors blur together. "He thought I was a hero."

Outside the sun begins setting, signaling the coming of his second patrol. Tsukauchi glances up from his phone to watch him spin. Amusement creeps into his voice, “So, you’ve said.”

“He thought I was a hero. Endeavor, the number two hero, looked at me and said “must be a hero”.”

Reo smiles at him. “Well, you do save people. And, by definition, a hero is someone noted for courageous acts and, or the nobility of their character. Which, by definition, would make you a hero.”

Midoriya immediately stops spinning, feet slamming into the floor where he faces Tsukauchi. The vigilante looks at the older boy wide eyed.

“Perhaps you’re not one in the eyes of the law,” Reo says, smiling softly down at his phone as the fifteen year old gapes at him, “But, you save people, and you help put bad guys in jail. And, maybe it’s not as glorious as being a pro hero and fighting flashy villains with your own flashy quirk. But, you didn’t become a vigilante for the glory, right?”

When Tsukauchi looks up again he’s greeted by Midoriya’s watery eyed expression. A few tears drip from his lashes, sliding down his cheeks, and a smile rivaling that of All Might is carved across his lips. The boy’s eyes pinch closed as the smile on his face grows. “Right.”

Reo lets the boy gather himself before speaking again. “So, are you ever going to tell me what happened or are you just going to keep repeating that Endeavor thought you were a hero?”

Midoriya scrubs a bit more at the tear tracks on his cheeks before he replies. “I was trying to tail this guy from the Eight Precepts, you know, do some actual recon like you told me to.”

“Wow,” Tsukauchi exclaims, “You? Doing what I say? Now that’s the most surprising news I’ve heard all day!”

Midoriya laughs, “I rip my stitches out once.”

“And please explain to me how you managed to rip your stitches? Was it through the vigorous activity that I warned against? Or how about the time I told you about my mother’s quirk and you still somehow managed to shake her bare hand.” Tsukauchi lets out a relieved sigh. “That could’ve gone wrong in so many ways.”

Midoriya shudders, thinking back on it. “If only in that instance your uncle really saved me.”

Reo huffs a laugh, “Anyway, so you were tailing the guy and what? Just happened to run into Endeavor?”

The vigilante rubs at his nose in phantom pain. “Quite literally.” Midoriya makes a face. “There’s really not much to the story to be honest, he just kind of brushed me off and walked away while talking shit about weapons and then…” Izuku pauses, trailing off.

Reo raises a brow. “And, then?”

Midoriya’s face flushes as he quickly leans his head on the back of the chair to stare at the ceiling. “It’s embarrassing.”

Tsukauchi glances back down at his phone, scrolling absentmindedly through his timeline. “No, embarrassing is being a professional criminal and getting your ass handed to you by a fifteen year old.”

Izuku scrubs at his face with his hands. “No, this was really stupid. Like I must have been high on something stupid.”

Reo lets out a low whistle, something on his phone catching his eye. “That’s pretty high on the stupid scale, you sure about that?”

Tsukauchi taps on the video, attention fully taken. A quiet voice filters lowly through the speaker, “*That’s Piper right? That’s gotta be him*.”

Midoriya starts spinning in his seat again, watching the ceiling twirl above him.

The video zooms in shakily, but the footage is clear. And there, in center frame, stands none other than Midoriya himself. Reo casts the boy a quick glance before turning back to the video.

The camera swivels towards another figure, obviously Endeavor by the back of the man’s flaming suit. “*I swear Endeavor literally just walked past him.*” The cameraman groans, “*I wish I could’ve got that on tape. They literally walked right into each other*.” The video pans back towards the vigilante. “*How is he not dead. Holy shit. If anyone says anything he’s one hundred percent a goner dude*.”

Midoriya winks at someone off camera. “*Bro*.” The phone camera swings back towards Endeavor, and while Endeavor is in frame it’s not him that’s taken the spotlight. “Did he just wink at his son?” The red

and white haired boy that's in frame seems just as surprised as the guy filming. The video quickly flips back towards the vigilante just in time to catch him blow a kiss at the already stunned teenager. *"Bro!"*

Reo barely suppresses the urge to laugh as he glances back up at the fifteen year old still spinning in the older boy's desk chair. "You're right that was pretty stupid."

Midoriya's head whips up, desperately trying to stop the chair's momentum. He lets out a distressed noise when Tsukauchi flashes him the phone screen.

"So," he says, grin spreading across his lips, "Endeavor's son."

Izuku lets out a quiet whine. "I told you it was really stupid."

Reo flips to his trending page, only half aware of the tags until something else catches his gaze. His eyes widen, a strangled noise escaping his throat as he scrambles up from his bed to shove the phone in the other boy's face.

Midoriya leans back a few inches to read the screen, eyes growing comically large. "Holy shit," he breathes, "I'm trending." His eyes widen further. "Please tell me that's not why I'm trending."

It is why he's trending.

---

19 · Trending in Japan

Pied Piper

9,259 Tweets

Ghost @gh000st_ · 3h

i dont know why **pied piper** is trending but i know he deserves it

Hawk's Toenail @crunchysushiii · 7m

ALSDJFLAKSDJF IS THIS BECAUSE HE BLEW A KISS AT ENDEAVOR'S SON RIGHT BEHIND ENDEAVOR'S BACK???? **PIED PIPER** IS AN ICON WE S T A N

Presentation Michael @loudboistan · 49m

This boi really just winked and blew a kiss at the number two hero's son, no hesitation, no remorse, this is the level of confidence I aspire to be. I say we elect **Pied Piper** for prime minister, we need this kind of confidence leading our government.

Riot! my bday!! @bakuqos · 26m

So let me get this straight. Endeavor sees **Pied Piper** . Thinks he's a HERO, proceeds to brush him off. But, his son, who was with him, realizes something is fishy. And so Piper just….. Winks, blows a kiss at him, and... takes off?? Im????

♡[Nico]le♡ @_crims0nri0t_ · 1h

This. This right here. This is it chief. **Pied Piper** is IT.

[Gif: Pied Piper, blowing a kiss at a stunned Todoroki Shouto.]

[alien emoji] Miki @jiikimiki · 2h

who is this **pied piper** person and why are we stanning them? is this a new idol or something?????? im genuinely so confused sdgffghfjjk

Soul [cherry emoji] @Luminasia_ · 37s

IM SCREAMING IM ABSOLUTELY S C R E A M I N G TAHT BOY THAT B O Y

PIED PIPER IS ASDJFLAKDSJF H O L Y S H I T

BDE @TheBDETwt · 40m

I'm out here trying to piss and come across a video of Endeavor's son with THAT face and you expect me to be okay???

Absolutely NOT I am NOT OKAY

PIED PIPER WHAT YOU HAVE HELPED CREATE

Human ЕЯЯ0r @obliigatory · 5m

I swear if DC is making ANOTHER remake of **Pied Piper** I'm going to SCREAM

LET IT D I E we don't need a 3RD remake

Midoriya can't escape the whispers of his vigilante persona. While there aren't many he catches a few people at his school the next day talking about the video during their free time. Even the dojo isn't safe from talk of his run in with Endeavor's son.

It embarasses the fifteen year old to no end and throws him off his beat everytime he hears Gamon laugh about it with one of the girls while cooling down. But, nothing throws him off more by the figure that walks through the dojo's front door.

Midoriya takes a foot to the face when his eyes lock on that of Hirano's.

The blow sends him stumbling to his hands and knees, multicolored stars sparking across his vision.

"Midoriya!" His sparring partner rushes to his side, grabbing his elbow to help him stumble his way up. "Are you okay? I thought you'd dodge that!"

He ignores their concern in favor of calling out a greeting to Hirano. "Welcome back." The boy is still a little dazed, but he offers the girl a smile and a small wave.

"Tell me that again when you don't have blood in your teeth." Hirano's eyes crinkle at the corners. She looks better than she did the last time he'd seen her. Her eyes look brighter and the boy can tell the

smile she offers him is genuine.

He gently cradles his cheek, turning back towards his sparring partner. “This is gonna bruise isn’t it?”

They grimace, nodding reluctantly. “Are you okay?”

Midoriya waves them off, swiping the blood away from his teeth with his tongue, assuring them that he’s fine. “I’ve had worse.”

“That doesn’t make me feel any better,” they call after him as he makes his way over towards Hirano.

She smiles as the fifteen year old approaches. “That was quite the hit you took there.”

Izuku returns the smile, there's still some blood clinging to his teeth and his jaw aches, but its sincerity isn’t marred by it. “That it was. Genji has gotten a lot better at squaring their kicks since you left.”

“Hirano?” The two turn towards the voice to find Chee Sensei walking towards them. “It’s good to see you again. How have you been doing?”

She offers the woman a sheepish smile. “I want to say great, but I’d be lying. It’s been better the last few months but…” She scratches at the back of her head. “I fell into the wrong crowd at school and they got me into a bit of trouble.”

Midoriya offers the girl a sympathy smile, remembering how he’d been a part of that ‘bit of trouble’.

“Since I just started my second year I figured it was time to find some new people to hang out around. I actually wanted to talk to you Sensei, about joining the dojo again.” She looks nervous bringing up the subject. “I realized that I missed this place, these people.”

The woman offers Hirano a soft smile, freckles casting her cheeks in a dim glow. “We’d be happy to have you back.”

The girl looks like she’s on the verge of happy tears as Midoriya’s smile stretches into a bright grin. He didn’t usually get to see the after effects of the work he did as Pied Piper. Izuku knew that he saved lives, but this was the first time he’d been allowed to see the ripple effects of what doing so created.

“I hope you haven’t gotten too rusty,” Midoriya jokes, smirking at her.

“Midoriya,” Ji-woo says, “Go wash the blood from your teeth and put some ice on your jaw. I don’t need your mother to call me crying again. Once was enough.”

The fifteen year old blanches as he pushes his sweaty curls back from his face. “I don’t know how I’d managed to forget about that.”

Ji-woo stares down at him, black eyes holding a deathly seriousness in them. “I haven’t been able to forget.”

The next day dawns like another other, when he wakes up his jaw is still sore and the bruise that’d formed there is noticeable to say the least. He pokes at the area around it in the mirror, grimacing at the bloom of darkened colors. He slips a mask on to cover it, only the barest edges of the top of it able to peak over the top of the mask. It’s not perfect, but it’ll have to do. He has plans today that can’t afford to wait any longer.

Izuku watches from a distance. This is most definitely one of the most stupid decisions he’s made, and he’s sure Reo wouldn’t approve of what he’s doing. Not only is he missing his first few classes for this, but he’s camping not too far from UA’s main gate, looking for someone who’d be able to help with his plan. He’d meant to do it far sooner than he is now. But, life had gotten a little too chaotic and *maybe* he’d forgotten about it.

He’s not in full vigilante dress, but he’s got his gloves and mask on, and he’s dyed his eyes a dark blue color with a new pair of contacts and tucked all his curls beneath a beanie all for the sake of this plan.

Midoriya pumps himself up, hopping from foot to foot in the alley he’s in. He starts up a convincing mumble of, “I’m late, I’m late, I’m late,” under his breath before he speedwalks out of his spot, coming up behind a girl he thinks will be able to help with his plan. He pretends to accidentally bump shoulders with her, the action nearly sending both of them tumbling to the concrete. Midoriya lets out a yelp as he scrambles to right himself, a near automatic, “I’m so sorry!” spilling from his lips. “Are you alright?”

The girl manages to keep her balance as well, fixing the hold on her

backpack. She turns to him flashing the boy an unreadable look. “I’m fine, no worries dude.”

Midoriya pretends to study her uniform, widening his eyes comically as he does so. “Do you go to UA?”

The girl glances him over, nodding reluctantly when she doesn’t immediately identify him as a threat.

Midoriya throws on his best puppy eyes and kicks his acting skills up a notch. He’d been planning scenarios for this conversation out for the last forty-eight hours. “Would you be able to help me with something? Only if you have the time though!” The boy fiddles with the edge of his hoodie, real nerves kicking in. He’d practiced this same conversation in his room a hundred times over, looking for the perfect way to get someone to do something for him while making them think it was their idea. “I’m one of Snipe-san’s new interns and he told me I was supposed to drop something off at his desk, but I realized I’m not actually *allowed* to go through the gate since I’m not a student or faculty member.” Izuku’s brows furrow with mock worry as he gently shifts from one foot to the other. “I tried calling him, but he’s not answering. Could you tell him I’m waiting outside?” And rule number for making people think it was their idea was never directly asking for whatever it was you wanted. Piper pulls a phone out of his pocket and checks the time. “I’m supposed to be at the agency before nine, but I was supposed to give him this before I went into work today.” He glances down at the plastic bag gripped in his hand. Inside it he has Snipe’s gun wrapped in a variety of multicolored tissue paper and a bit of glitter he’d nabbed from a small time kidnapping ring disguised as a party store. He hopes it’s enough to at least conceal what’s inside the bag until it gets to the hero.

The girl looks a little reluctant at first, but Midoriya has his mother’s eyes. Even if their color had changed, both the mother and son had some of the sincerest eyes one could find. He’s lucky that this trait doesn’t go unnoticed by the girl. “I mean… I can just take it to him if you want? I have to pass by the teachers’ office on the way to class anyway.”

If it’s even possible, Midoriya’s now blue eyes widen further. “Are you sure? I don’t want to make you late because of me.” *Success* .

The girl offers him a small smile. “It’s not a problem. I can just leave it on his desk if he’s not there right?”

Izuku's eyes brighten, smile widening behind his mask. "Of course! If he's there could you just tell him one thing for me?"

Snipe leans back in his desk chair, tired of looking at all of the papers spread across his work space. He'd come in early to try and get some of it done, but he still wasn't quite awake yet this early in the morning.

Behind him someone clears their throat. "Sensei?"

Snipe looks up from his desk, turning to look at one of the students from his class standing just behind him. "Haya-san, how can I help you?"

She holds out a plastic bag for him, looking a little sheepish. "Your intern said that he couldn't get through the gate, so I offered to bring this up to you."

The hero stares at her, bewilderment clear on his face. "My intern?"

She nods as Snipe gently takes the bag from her. "He apologized for it taking him so long to return it. And, said that he'd forgotten he'd thrown it under his bed."

Snipe eyes the girl curiously. "You're certain it was of my interns?"

The girl is starting to look a little concerned. "I mean *he* said he was one of your interns, someone called Piper?"

The hero's eyes snap back towards the bag in his hand. "Alright, thank you Haya, I'll see you in class, make sure Hado isn't late again."

"Yes sir, I'll see ya' then." She gives the hero a mock salute before heading back out the door.

Aizawa turns towards Snipe with a raised brow. "I thought you didn't have any interns right now?"

Snipe cautiously sets the bag on his desk. "I don't."

"Sansa," the detective sighs, "Can you please explain why I'm getting

calls about Piper having *trended* on twitter two days ago?" The man has his forehead pressed against his desk, dark circles hidden from view.

The feline officer laughs at the question as he turns towards the detective. "It's nothing too bad to be honest. He just ran into Endeavor." Naomasa's head snaps up and Tamakawa lets out a surprised laugh at the look on the man's face. "He's fine Tsukauchi, Endeavor didn't recognize him. Piper's just going viral for flirting with the man's son."

Naomasa splutters, startled at the revelation, but there's an undeniable hint of relief on his face.

Sansa huffs a laugh. "He is a teenager after all."

On his desk the detective's phone buzzes. The man lets out another sigh before answering. "Musutafu Police, quirk crimes division, Detective Tsukauchi speaking."

"Piper made contact with one of UA's students."

Naomasa immediately recognizes the voice as Eraserhead's, the man straightening in his seat. "Is he there?"

"He was. He sent a package to Snipe and manipulated one of the students into getting it to him."

Tsukauchi drags a notebook towards him, jotting everything down. "Do you think it was the work of a quirk?"

Aizawa strides down the hall towards Nezu's office. "It's always a possibility for something like this. Maybe a slight form mind manipulation or suggestion. I know you were looking into non offensive quirks and one of those would certainly fall under it."

"Right," Tsukauchi agrees, "I'll head over. Try not to touch anything he might have we may be able to find prints." Naomasa glances up, sharing a look with Sansa as the two of them push themselves up from their desks. He presses the phone between his ear and his shoulder. "Hopefully forensics will be able to lift something."

Chapter End Notes

Good afternoon everyone! I hope everyone enjoyed this chapter. It's a little all over the place because I realized that there were

still some things to wrap up that I'd forgotten to and I wanted to get them done before we move into the next portion of this fic :))) good luck with the next chapter.
You'll need it.
As a precursor for next week I'd like to warn everyone that the next chapter will include large spoilers from the manga (season 4) If spoilers are something that bothers you I'd suggest reading the manga it's great you won't regret it :)

Also I kind of completely destroyed my computer screen this week because I'm a dumbass and I was traveling with it while it was out of its case. The guy said it could cost as much as 400 dollars to replace so I set up a ko-fi and I'm doing art commissions to help pay for it!
My kofi and commission details are linked in my twitter
https://twitter.com/blackholeca/status/1128802198807351296

If you can't send anything then just spreading my info helps! I love you guys! Hope you have a great week! Until next time!!

Eridanos

Chapter Notes

> Warning!!
>
> I mentioned it at the end of last week's chapter, but this chapter contains spoilers from the manga (season 4) all who continue down beware

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Midoriya doesn't stick around UA for longer than necessary. Of course he'd wanted to gawk at the shining building for longer than he does, but something in his stomach twists when he looks at the windows glimmering in the early morning light of late September.

He's late to school by a few hours, his teacher berating him for missing class. But, he does nothing further than that, no phone call to Inko, no making the boy stay late, no reassigning of their cleaning duties. Though it comes as no surprise to Izuku. It was well known to the students of Aldera Middle School that the faculty could be found slacking in several areas, especially when concerning those at the top of the class.

Even being quirkless Midoriya found use in that one aspect, but Izuku wasn't the only student who fell under the sheltering umbrella of their grades.

"Hey shit stain," the voice that calls out to him belongs to none other than Bakugou Katsuki. There's a sneer on his lips and venom in his eyes. "I thought you'd finally decided to kick the bucket."

Midoriya had faced people scarier than that of the fifteen year old Bakugou Katsuki. People with *real* bloodlust and a *real* determination to kill him. But even still, there's a bone deep fear that washes over him anytime the boy came around with that look in his eyes. "Not yet." He'd learned to hide it better over the months as a vigilante, but it still lingered like the voice in his head.

Bakugou had noticed the change in the boy as well. The teen could still see the nervous fear in the other's eyes, but now it was accompanied by wavering, barely there smirks and what he'd nearly consider snarky comebacks. Katsuki doesn't reply to his response, merely narrows his eyes at the green-haired boy as he takes a seat at

his desk and pulls out his notebook.

Midoriya shifts under his gaze, only able to relax after the blonde finally turns away. Their class currently has a free period, their mathematics teacher having called in sick for the day. It's a lucky break for Izuku. It gives him time to ask the nice girl who sits across the room what he missed and allows him to catch up on his school work.

But, while Midoriya is making the most of their free time he can hear whispers throughout the rest of the room. His ears hone in on one particular conversation between two boys behind him.

"I'm telling you dude. I saw him carrying some old lady's groceries."

Midoriya can't see it when the other boy shakes his head. "No. There's literally nothing you can do to convince me you weren't hallucinating."

"I wasn't hallucinating!" It's a whispered exclamation of dismay. "He was carrying around her groceries on his pipe like it was a tenbin or something."

Midoriya's pen pauses in its scrawling notes.

"Dude. Why would a vigilante help some grandma with *groceries* of all things?"

"I don't know, but I'm telling you I *saw* it."

"I literally don't believe you."

"Dude come *on* !"

Izuku gently taps his pen against his notebook, thinking. *They're talking about me aren't they.* He feels a little giddy at the thought. It's certainly not the first time he'd overheard his classmates talking about his vigilante persona. Just yesterday he'd heard a group of girls whispering on his way to class about his encounter with Endeavor's son in a way that had the teacher asking if he had a fever when he walked in the room.

" *Imagine if they knew it was you.* " Something in his heart twists at the reemergence of the caustic voice in his head. It's maw drags open, incisors glinting in the dark as it grins. " *Quirkless Deku? A vigilante?* "

More voices emerge, taking on the identities of his classmates.

“ *I guess it makes sense,* ” a boy muses, “ *He's always been a thorn in our sides. Now he’s made himself a thorn to the actual heroes too.* ”

“ *Do you think if I call the police and told them who Piper is I’d get a reward?”* One voice laughs.

Someone else shakes their head. “ *Who’d get a reward for turning in someone so useless?* ”

“ *If I punched him right now do you think the police would consider that as self defense against a dangerous criminal?* ”

“ *Dangerous criminal my ass.”* A girl laughs. “ *The only thing dangerous about him is… actually I can’t think of anything.”*

“ *A vigilante that’s quirkless? No wonder he comes to school all beat up. It’s because he sucks at it.* ”

In his lap his fists clench, fingernails carving crescent shapes into his palms.

“ *You know why he became a vigilante right?* ” Bakugou’s voice rises up above the others, planting a seed of fear in Midoriya’s chest, terrified of the boy’s next words. “ *It’s because he couldn’t become a* ***hero*** *.”*

In his head their forms are nothing but silhouettes with too white teeth that cut like headlights through the dark and set his fear aflame like lighter fluid.

“Midoriya!” The fifteen year old’s head whips up, eyes blown wide, green irises backlit by the fear in his chest. His teacher scowls at him from the front of the class, unable to see the turmoil in his eyes. “I said free period is over. Get your textbook out.”

killuakazu reblogged appletreekawaii

ocktagawa:

I don’t know how many of you are actually aware of everything that Pied Piper has done for the community so here’s a list of everything for those who don’t

Pied Piper has:

- fought and captured:
  - countless drug dealers
  - countless thieves and robbers
  - an arsonist
  - multiple kidnappers
  - multiple rapists
  - several well known murders
- took down:
  - an entire kidnapping ring
  - two drug dealer operations
- evaded capture from:
  - police (multiple times)
  - heroes (multiple times)
- he helped my grandma carry groceries home???

ocktagawa:

Update!!!

He snuck into the hospital to sign the cast of a little boy he saved?!??!?

[image: young boy smiling, pointing at the signature on his arm cast, in the background stands a horrified woman who gawks at the boy.]

I seriously don’t understand why there’s so many heroes and police that hate him?? He’s literally helping them do their jobs??? When someone helps me do my job I thank them.

endeavortodogood:

Don’t know if you knew, but it’s literally illegal to use your quirk in public without the proper licencing. It’s been a law since the emergence of quirks.

ocktagawa:

show me one viable instance where he’s been seen using a quirk

go ahead, i’ll wait

#i mean it’s also illegal to jaywalk? #but we still do that anyway #also not to mention i know a lot of people who use their quirks in public #it’s not as big of a deal as everyone makes it out to be #pied piper #vigilantes

16,743 notes

The fifteen year old doesn’t stick around school for long after it lets out. Instead setting out at a light jog towards home, attempting to outrun the demons in his head. He runs through the motions of the remainder of his homework when he gets there, drowning out the voices with an endless amount of kanji. When he finishes the last of it the voices have dispersed until only the original remains. He shoves down a quick meal past the occasional quips it makes.

He strips out of his school uniform and tugs on a tank top that probably exposes one too many scars before waving goodbye to his mother.

He grabs a face mask from their family stash out of habit, the security

and confidence it gives him acting as a form of defense from the whispering voice in his head. Piper was an unstoppable force, unwavering in the face of fear and danger. And, with his mind under siege a little false confidence is exactly what he needs.

Midoriya sets out their door at another light jog, this time towards the dojo. The trip takes the boy a little less than thirty minutes to get there, his breathing only slightly labored when he slowly to a walk outside the front windows. He pulls his face mask down to his chin as he pushes through the door, the boy spying Chee Sensei from the corner of his eye. Midoriya slips off his shoes before making his way towards the woman. He pulls his backpack around where he can reach it, pulling his fingerless mma gloves out of it to slip on. “So when does Hirano start back?” Midoriya asks, sliding next to Ji-woo as they watch a few of the other early students start in on their warm ups.

Chee Sensei glances down at him from the corner of her eyes. “She starts back next week. It’s been a while so I’ll take it slow with her the first few weeks.”

Izuku nods. “That’s probably for the best.”

The woman eyes him. “You didn’t seem too surprised to see her. Did you two talk before she decided to come back?”

The boy tries not to let his surprise show. Sure he’d gotten kicked in the face when the girl had first walked in, but if he thinks back on it he can’t say he’d been too surprised to see her back. “I didn’t.” *I did.* He hadn’t been expecting her to come back to the dojo. He’d expected her to find some new friends, but he’d never once thought that she might come back for some old ones. But, once she’d shown up at the dojo’s doorstep he couldn’t think of any better solution to her problems than the one standing before him. “I wasn’t expecting it. But, it didn’t surprise me.” He looks up at his teacher, studying the barely there glow of her freckles. “When she first left you told me that Muay Thai was only a source of entertainment for her. And, you were right. But, I don’t think she was ever here for the fighting, I don’t think she ever will be. She had a lot of friends here that she left behind when she quit. She said so herself yesterday didn’t she?”

The woman doesn’t glance down at him again, merely continues observing the students still warming up. “That she did.”

“She probably does care for the sport, but she respects it,” Midoriya continues quietly, “Respects the people who do care for it. And, I

think that's what's important, that she takes our seriousness seriously."

Ji-woo gives a small nod of agreement as Midoriya finishes up with his gloves and moves to set his backpack down and join the other students.

Midoriya pushes the sweaty curls out of his face as he leans against the staff he uses at the dojo. "You're almost too much for me to handle now."

His sparring partner for the day lets out a breathless laugh. "Don't even lie Midoriya. You and I both know I'm nowhere close to being able to beat you. I don't even know why Chee Senei matched us up together."

The fifteen year offers the other a bright smile. "It's like starting a game on hard mode. Once you've experienced the hardest level it makes the lower ones seem easy." Midoriya glances at the Ji-woo as she talks with one of the other students, running them through a new move set. "It may seem a little cruel to set up a beginner with someone who's been doing it for years. But, she knows what she's doing." He turns his gaze back towards his sparring partner, smile softening. "Put your faith in her and she'll take you far."

Midoriya pushes his way out of the dojo's door, the threat of rain rumbling in the distance. He adjusts his backpack on his shoulder and slips his face mask back on before setting off down the sidewalk. Cars flash by him down the street, headlights leaving streaks of sunspots across his vision.

He can feel fatigue creeping up on him, today's training having tired him out. He's honestly excited to be able to get home and sleep. But, oh, cruel and ruthless fate, how it seeks to make the boy name Midoriya Izuku suffer.

In the distance a train whistle shrieks and from in front of him another car's headlights blind him. The boy raises a hand to block the light, pausing in his stride just as something barrels into his legs. He stumbles to the side a bit, thrown off balance. He looks down, wide-eyed at the white-haired little girl that'd run into him. She's sitting on

the sidewalk now after having fallen back in their collision, and now she hurriedly pushes herself up.

Izuku crouches down, offering her a hand up, a worried furrow to his brow. “Are you okay?”

The girl ignores him in favor of standing herself. She keeps her head down before taking off again, right towards the road.

Midoriya’s eyes go wide as he springs up, another set of headlights blinding him. He swipes blindly for the girl snagging her wrist before she makes it into the street. He pulls her towards him, holding her tight as his heart palpitates in his chest. He can feel her struggling in his hold and gives her some breathing room, taking ahold of her arms to study her in the dim light of the street lamps. He checks her over for any immediate injuries, and upon seeing no blood takes note of the bandages wrapping her arms and legs.

There’s fear swirling in his eyes, the possibilities of what could have happened fogging his mind. “You’re not hurt, are you?”

She must see the genuine worry flickering his eyes, because she calms in his arms before pulling herself closer, clinging to the front of his shirt. She shakes between his arms and he hugs her gently to his chest. “T-That must’ve been scary right?”

Midoriya glances around, looking for anyone she might’ve been with. Izuku freezes, thoughts swarming his mind. *What was she running from?* He looks behind them, seeing a figure emerging from the alley the girl had stormed out of. The man’s form is looming, beak mask glinting in the overhead street lamp.

“Eri.”

The girl in his arm tenses, fists clinging tighter to the front of his shirt. Midoriya quickly looks the man over, he’s tall, muscular and bald, and his eyes are cast in shadow. The boy searches, but there’s no noticeable mutations that could clue him in as to what quirk the man has.

If not for bird mask Midoriya could have mistaken him for any other Musutafu citizen. But, at the sight of beak Izuku recalls the words Giran had offered him.

“A guy named Chisaki Kai… he and some of his higher ups are all running around wearing bird masks.”

“Eri come here. Your dad will get angry if we don’t get back soon. It’s already past your bedtime.”

Hojo Yu scratches at the skin around the break mask covering his face. “It’s annoying,” he murmurs to himself quietly, “It blocks off part of my vision.” He pries the break off, letting it hang lazily in his hand as he takes in a deep breath without it. “It doesn’t have to be a break, right? Boss won’t be mad if I come back with a regular one, right?”

Midoriya slowly stands, unwinding the girl’s hands from his shirt and gently pushing her to hide behind him. “Who are you?” Izuku calls out to the man, shielding the girl with his body.

The man’s hairless brows furrow into a scowl. “I feel as if that’s a question I should be asking.”

Midoriya offers the man a scowl of his own. “Not when the girl you’re looking for is terrified of you.”

“She’s not terrified of me.” The man takes a step forward, mask swinging gently in his hand. “We were on our way back home when something scared her and she took off.”

But Midoriya knows, knows that fear like the kind in that girl’s crimson eyes didn’t come from just anything. He’d seen versions of that terror in Emi’s eyes, in his own eyes. He’d experienced a similar fear many times while growing up with an abusive best friend. But, the fear in her eyes was worse, it spoke to him of untold horrors.

“And the bandages?”

“She’s clumsy.” The man’s voice is flat, tone serious.

“Would you tell the police the same story?”

The man stares at him, a look of almost surprise on the man’s face. “I said she’s my niece right? Why would you call the police?”

Midoriya’s eyes harden. “It doesn’t matter if she’s your niece,” the boy grinds out, viridescent eyes flashing in the headlights of another passing car. “It seems obvious to me that wherever you’re going isn’t anywhere she wants to be.”

Midoriya lifts his phone from his pocket, the boy already halfway done dialing 110 when the yakuza makes his move. He charges at the boy with a fist raised, normally it’s something that the boy would

dodge, but the little girl, Eri, is still cowering behind him. So, he drops the phone and redirects the fist, pushing if off its trajectory and countering the move with one of his own. He brings an elbow up, slamming it into the man's chin.

Hojo stumbles back a bit, obviously not having expected the fifteen year old to actually fight back.

"You're part of the Eight Precepts aren't you?" Midoriya asks as the man recovers from the blow. Midoriya reaches behind him without looking away from his opponent, gently untangling the girl's fingers from the bottoms of his shorts. He whispers softly to the girl, "I need to protect you, okay? I need you to go hide. I don't want you getting hurt."

He can tell she's terrified without even looking at her, but he feels her nod her head again the back of his leg before she takes off.

Hojo tries to make a running grab for her, but Midoriya moves before he can get close enough.

Midoriya throws a punch at the man, the blow missing when Hojo leans back. Izuku would feel giddy if not for the seriousness of the situation, because the punch wasn't the only thing the man should've dodged. The move disguises the kick that he brings up from the same side, the top of his sneaker clad foot slamming into the man's jaw.

The fifteen year old expects it to be a finishing blow. It usually is. But, it isn't the man's jaw gives under the force of Midoriya's blow. It's the boy's foot.

Hojo Yu's quirk was a peculiar one, and in the past it'd given him trouble with the people in his life. But, then Overhaul himself had come along, acting as his salvation. Now it serves him as a tool, one that he can use to help his savior. The crystals on his face retreat, dissolving back into his skin.

He watches the boy stumble back, hobling as far away as he can with only one foot. Hojo can see him holding back tears, the half of his face not covered by a mask twisted with pain. To his benefit though the boy doesn't make a sound, Midoriya instead taking to biting down on his lip hard enough to draw blood.

Midoriya can't actually tell if his foot is broken or not. But, he can taste copper on his tongue and his injured foot radiates a fire hotter than the sun in his chest.

The man doesn't give him much of a chance to recover, another fist flying for his face.

Midoriya's movement is restricted with an injured foot, he's not sure if it can hold his weight and it makes him hesitant to try for anymore kicks. Izuku stumbles out of the punch's path, and dodges another swing the man throws out. He's worried to try for any counters to the yakuza's attacks, wary of the man's quirk. *It's likely that those crystals can spread further than just his head.* The vigilante slips around another wide swing. *Giran said it was the higher ups that were wearing the bird masks. If that's true then I have to make the assumption that he's one of them, and that he's one of them for a reason.*

Midoriya knows he needs to end this fight quickly, but against a quirk like this it becomes difficult. *I need to test the full body theory, but it needs to be someway that won't injure me too terribly if it turns out to be true.*

The vigilante spies an opening and springs up, sending out a flying heel kick into the other's solar plexus. The move sends Hojo stumbling back, but Midoriya could tell the moment his foot made contact that more crystals had gathered beneath the man's black button up. Izuku uses his chest as a springboard, stumbling when he lands on his bad foot, his knee nearly giving out beneath him.

He curses, jumping back as he tries to keep most of his weight off of the foot.

It's not a hardening of the skin, he's just growing crystals out in the areas that I'm attacking. Meaning… All I have to do is not let him know where I'm attacking. And however I do it, the blow needs to be a heavy one. In the distance a train whistle cries out again over a loud rumble of thunder. Midoriya knows that any punches he tries could be disastrous if he messes up the timing, the same for knee and elbow hits as well as most kicks. He's limited on his attack options with no weapons on hand.

Another heel kick would probably be the safest move since it's not likely to do as much damage if something goes wrong. But, to do that I need to distract him. On his back the weight of his bag tells him exactly what he needs to do.

The green-haired boy charges at the man, slipping his backpack off his shoulders in the run up and slinging it directly at the man's face. Behind the bag Izuku continues to move. While technically not Muay

Thai, the attack he's thinking of can channel some two thousand pounds of force into his opponent, which is exactly what he needs to help end the fight. Or, it will at least grant him enough time to grab one of his phones to call the police.

He plants himself in front of the Yakuza, backpack slamming into the man's nose as Midoriya brings his knee up, leaving his bad foot to hold his weight before he drives his heel into the man's abdomen with enough force to break a baseball bat.

The blow is a powerful one, and connects against the man's fleshy stomach, no crystals to get in the boy's way. His bad foot takes another rough beating from the move, but it's worth it for the clean execution.

The man doubles over and Izuku takes his chance to try and drive a knee into the man's stomach. But, Hojo blocks the blow with his hands, catching the hit before it can do any damage. He shoves the boy back, Izuku stumbling back from the unexpected counter.

Yu raises his fist again and the fifteen year old's brain glitches, he raises a hand to defend himself. Whether it's to try and catch the blow or just a desperate attempt to block it he doesn't know. He watches, green eyes blown wide in the few seconds before the man's fist connects with the boy's open palm, as crystals bloom just below Hojo's knuckle line.

The crystal like protrusions goes right through Midoriya's hand, breaking bone and snapping veins. And during some delusional moment, as he's watching the man pull his hand back, ripping the crystals out of his skin. He wonders if he can find a bandaid large enough to hide it.

Blood slides off of the crystals' edges, pattering to the concrete as the girl cries out, running out of her spot and into the fray to try and grab his hand.

The young girl's hand clutches at his and there's an explosion of pain as the hole in his hand disappears as quickly as it'd come. Yellow bruises turn black and disappear completely only to be replaced by even older ones. Week old cuts tear open in the span of a second before the man is ripping the girl backwards by the back of her dress. He feels a gash on his side tear open and a four month old concussion comes back to him in a rush and the vigilante watches her red eyes go wide, the small horn on her forehead sparking with power.

Another car flashes by in a blur of white and red as Midoriya staggers on his feet, a trail of blood making its way down his forehead and down his side. He reaches up to gently feel the wound on his head. *This is* , his thoughts are sluggish, *What happened?* He stumbles into a streetlight, knees weak.

The vigilante looks up, vision going double and blackening at the edges. Hojo watches him warily from a distance, the girl's bandaged wrist gripped tightly between his hand.

He can't see the tears on the girl's face, or the fear and pain swirling in her eyes. But, he knows that they're there, knows it like a deeply ingrained primordial knowledge. The fifteen year old stretches out a hand to her, side roaring with a fire almost as hot as the one in his chest. He wants desperately for her to take his hand, but the villain gently tugs at the girl's wrist, grabbing her attention. She looks up at the man, then back towards the vigilante.

He gently tugs at her wrist again and this time she follows, not putting up any fight.

Midoriya makes to take a step forward, but his legs give out on him and he collapses. He curses as they disappear back down the alley.

Through the haze in his head he crawls for his backpack, desperate to find his other phone.

I'm losing blood. The vigilante presses a hand against the gash on his side. His vision dims further, more black than anything else as he taps at one of the contacts once he finds the phone Giran had given him.

Midoriya weakly presses the phone against his ear as he waits for Tsukauchi to answer. The boy tries standing again, using one of the buildings as a crutch. He can hear the blood roaring through his ears at a near deafening decibel. The vigilante can barely hear the muffled, "Piper?" that comes out of his phone's speaker as the call finally goes through.

"Sugachi," Midoriya slurs, "'m bleedin' out 'ere… Lotz a blood… " The boy sucks in a breath as his vision wavers. "'orry… 'm sorry," he mumbles quietly, "'m useless." One of Midoriya's legs give out again and he takes a knee, still clinging desperately to the wall. He curses, angry tears slipping from his eyes as the once distant thunder roars overhead and rain begins falling. It's nothing but a drizzle as he slams the side of his fist into the wall, his blood and tears mixing with rainwater as his vision cuts out and his mind blanks.

“Piper?” Giran’s voice filters through the vigilante’s small phone speaker as it clatters to the concrete with the boy’s body. Giran pulls the phone away from his face, frowning at the device. “You’ll owe me for this one kid.”

The broker opens a drawer at his desk, pulling out a second phone and dialing the number from memory. It rings for a few moments before someone picks up on the other end. “Doc, it’s Giran… I’ve got a favor to ask of ya’.”

Chapter End Notes

> And that's it for this chapter! I'm feeling a bit like Midoriya after letting Eri split through his grasp, but I'm a sucker for pain what can I say?
>
> I also want to add about how amazing it was reading through everyone's comments last week, I'm glad you guys liked the five second tododeku interaction lmaooo
> Anyway! I hope you all enjoyed this chapter! Until next week!

Canis Venatici

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Midoriya wakes up slowly, eyes fluttering open and close, open and close. His retinas trying to adjust to the light. His brain feels foggy, like he's thinking in slow motion. The feeling is foreign, and if he had anymore capacity for thought he'd say the feeling was an unwelcome one. The room he's in is pretty dim, and the leather couch he's laying on is just a tad uncomfortable.

He rouses his head into motion, looking down at his body. The only thing preventing him from being completely bare chested is a set of bandages wrapped around his upper torso.

"He really packed you full of painkillers, probably a little too much."

Midoriya slowly pushes himself up. It feels a little hard to breathe and he reaches up to tug that mask from his face, but Giran quickly stops him with a hand.

"Don't do that. You'll hate yourself for it later. I made sure no one took it off despite the doc's insistence." Giran looks him over as the boy carefully pulls himself into a seated position. "Whoever you were messing with certainly did a number on ya."

Midoriya lifts a hand to his head, feeling another set of bandages beneath his fingers, still not having said a word to the man.

"A mild concussion, gash on your side, and quite a few other scrapes and bruises."

The fifteen year old finally croaks out a, "Why am I here?"

The broker's glasses glint in the dim lighting of his office. "You called me. Though, I assume it was meant for someone else."

The vigilante groans, stumbling up onto his feet. "What time is it?"

Giran watches him carefully to see if he'll actually stay up. "It's about thirty minutes till midnight."

"I need to go."

The man sighs, walking back towards his desk and tossing a t-shirt at the kid. “At least put that on. Your other one was covered in blood you know.” The man nods towards one corner of the room. “Your backpack is over there, both of your phones are waterlogged though.”

Izuku curses as he pulls the shirt on over his head, the stitches in his side stretching.

“If you’re going to meet someone you better take care of that head wrap as well.”

Midoriya mutters a few choice words under his breath as he yanks the bandage off his head, stumbling towards his backpack in the corner as he slowly sobers up. The bag is still wet, drenched in rainwater similarly to still dampened shorts.

“You know I had to call in quite a few favors to patch you up,” Giran says from behind him, “Someone to trace you, someone to pick you up, not to mention having to call that old geezer in. He put up a real fight about it, but he still owed me for putting him in contact with a certain someone.”

Midoriya slings the bag over his shoulder, shivering when the cold of it starts seeping through his new shirt. “I’ve got two hundred thousand yen saved up, so if it costs anymore than that you’ll have to wait.”

The broker waves his hand casually, dismissing the statement. “Consider it a favor,” Giran says. “I’ll call it in when the need arises.”

Midoriya side eyes the man. The last thing the boy wants to do is owe someone like Giran anything. “You know what’s on my ethics card. If you ask for anything that’s not on it then favor or no, I won’t do it. If that’s not something you can deal with then I can get the cash.”

Giran watches him with a knowing smirk. “I wouldn’t have expected anything less from Musutafu’s esteemed Pied Piper.”

Midoriya makes his way back to where he’d last seen the girl, looking for traces of where she might’ve been taken. But, whether or not there had ever been anything for him to follow, everything that had once been has been washed away by the night rain. He spies the last of his blood stained water disappearing down a drain and it feels like the last of his hope slipping down his throat to dissolve in his stomach

acid. There's a weight in his chest that he's not used to.

There had been many times during his run as a vigilante where the boy had found himself lacking, many times where he'd been unable to stop something bad from happening, especially when he'd been starting out. And though he'd sometimes found himself unable to help, he'd always been able to find someone who *could* do something.

But, here, now, he had undeniably and irrevocably failed. Failed to save the girl, failed to get help, failed to do anything other than find himself injured and indebted to a villain. Midoriya tugs violently at his curls, tears threatening to slip down his cheeks like rainwater.

He wants to scream, wants to punch something. Instead, he cries. Izuku presses back of his hand against his mouth to prevent any sobs from escaping as he leans back against the alley wall, staring up towards the narrow strip of sky to see the dark, monochromatic clouds rolling above him. The fifteen year old doesn't want to leave, doesn't want to move, even though logic tells him that the girl, Eri, won't return here.

She'd left because of him.

She'd gone silently because of him.

Midoriya curses, pushing himself away from the wall. He fishes in his pocket for the new phone Giran had handed him before he'd left the man's warehouse. The vigilante paces the length of the alley as he dials 110. "Put me on the phone with Detective Tsukauchi Naomasa. What do you mean, is this an emergency? Of course it's an emergency," Midoriya snarls, angry tears building in his eyes. "Just put him on the damned phone before I decide storming the police station is a faster method!"

Naomasa stretches in his desk chair, arms thrown up over his head as he tries to unwind some of the kinks in his back.

Sansa watches him from his own desk, chin perched on his paw. "Long day?"

Tsukauchi lets his arms fall, turning towards the officer with a sigh. "The only prints we got from Piper's glorified glitter bomb were Haya Yuyu's, the UA student Piper came into contact with. What she told us matched Piper's description pretty well. She said she couldn't see his

hair, and he had blue eyes this time, but he was evidently wearing his gloves. So, if there was ever any reason to doubt that it was Piper that we're dealing with, then the gloves certainly dispel it." Naomasa leans his head on the back of his chair. "Evidently Piper only asked her to bring Snipe out to meet him, and she was the one who offered to take it up to him. We brought in a specialist just in case so we could see if they were able to sense if any quirk had been used on the girl. But, they said that they couldn't detect any outside quirk usage so that's yet another dead end."

Sansa offers the man a look of sympathy before the phone on the detective's desk lights up with an incoming call from dispatch.

Naomasa answers it with his standard greeting.

"Detective Tsukauchi, there's someone on the phone that's asking to talk to you. They very addamently explained that it's an emergency."

Naomasa switches the phone to his other ear, sending a look towards Sansa. "Patch them through."

There's a few seconds of dial tone before a rustling noise filters through the speaker. "Musutafu Police, quirk crimes division, Detective Tsukauchi speaking."

"Detective."

Naomasa freezes, immediately recognizing the voice from the countless audio recordings he'd recently listened to from 110 dispatch calls. "Piper," the man releases the name like a breath as he leans back in his seat.

"District six, block seventeen. There's an alley between building thirteen and seven. Four or so hours ago I ran into a little girl. She had long white hair, red eyes, a small horn protrusion on her forehead, and she was terrified. She was in a plain dress, but she was barefoot and had bandages wrapping both of her arms and legs."

Midoriya steps out of the alley, pausing at his reflection in a building's window. The pain in his side has grown, the meds that'd been in him slowly wearing off. He hadn't thought to check the wound after waking up and does so now, lifting his shirt. "She was running from a man who referred to her as Eri. He was tall, bald, muscular, and had some sort of crystallization quirk. When he first arrived he was wearing a beak like mask on the lower half of his face. I believe he could be a possible member of the Eight Precepts of Death." Midoriya

presses the phone between his ear and his shoulder, holding it there while he unwinds the bandages covering his wound. “I don’t know what kind of relationship he had with the girl, if they had any, but she was…” the boy pauses momentarily, eyes widening as he stares at the wound on his side, “terrified of him…”

Midoriya stares at the wound in the reflection, eyes widening. “It’s in the same spot.” *No,* he thinks, *it’s the same wound.* It’s surgically stitched this time around, but it’s the same. His mind roars, remembering the spark of power from the girl’s horn, the pain. He lets his shirt slip from his grasp, and his eyes fall upon is left hand. The boy studies it in the streetlight, looking for a wound that no longer exists, and his foot too. He glances down at it in awe.

“Piper?”

“Did she?” The vigilante murmur quietly to himself. He quickly looks for his other stitch worthy scar from his encounter with Death Arms, he strains his neck, looking back at where it should be. But, it too is gone. He scours his body for scars he knows should be there, but most of them he finds have been erased. “Did she rewind me?”

Tsukauchi’s brow furrows in confusion. “Piper?”

“I lost,” comes the vigilante’s whispered reply.

“Lost what? The girl?” The detective asks, waving at Sansa to grab his attention. The feline looks up, walking over as Naomasa slides him the address the vigilante had given him. He pulls the phone away from his face by a few centimeters, covering the speaker as he drops his voice to a low whisper, so the vigilante can’t hear, “I need you to send two patrol cars to this address, tell them to be on the lookout for Piper. I’ll follow as soon as I can.”

“The fight,” Midoriya murmurs a few moments later, clarifying himself. “I injured my foot and the man put a gaping hole through my hand with his quirk.”

On the other end of the line Naomasa freezes, hand unwrapping from around his speaker as Sansa gives him a brief nod and takes off.

“Eri, the girl, jumped in and grabbed my hand. It must have been her quirk that activated.” He lets his hand go limp, bandages hanging limply between his fingers as he locks eyes with his reflection. “A type of rewind button?” He mutters the thought to himself almost offhandedly. “Her quirk,” the vigilante starts, more confident in his

theory now. “I think it has the ability to rewind a person’s ‘clock’ so to speak.” Midoriya turns away from the window, pacing again as the cogs in his head turn. “Both of the major wounds I got from fighting that man are completely gone, no scars, no nothing, and all within meer seconds.”

Naomasa taps his pen against his desk. *Couldn’t that just be a high powered healing quirk?*

“But, the thing is, she didn’t just heal my wounds. She brought back old ones, *months* old ones. We may not see eye to eye on how things need to be done, but… you’re a good man Tsukauchi-san. That’s why I called you.”

Naomasa pauses, the grip on his pen slackening.

“Please be on the lookout for her,” Tsukauchi can hear the desperate tone in the boy’s voice. “If I’m able to find out any information on her or her whereabouts I’ll inform you. I hope you’ll be willing to pay the same courtesy if you’re able to find her first. I just… I want to know that she’s safe, that’s all.”

Naomasa opens his mouth to respond, but is cut off by the dial tone of an ended call. The man whips the phone awake from his face, merely able to stare at it for a moment. He grimaces, setting the phone back on the receiver and quickly pushing himself up to follow Sansa’s path.

“Detective?” Midoriya glances down at the phone in his hand, a little bewildered. “Ah, I didn’t mean to hang up yet,” the boy breathes out a sigh, tucking the phone back in his pocket. He looks around the area once more, searching for anything he might’ve missed. But, there’s nothing and Izuku heads towards home with only the added sense of dread and guilt hanging from his heart, weighing it down.

He makes it home within fifteen minutes. The boy midway through pulling his house keys out when Inko swings the door open wildly.

“Izuku!” His mother storms up to him, immediately throwing her arms around him and enveloping him in a bone crushing hug. He tenses at first, the move sending bright sparks of pain flying through his side, but he eventually relaxes into her hold. “I-I tried calling so many times and it just kept going to voicemail,” she sobs. “It’s almost one, where have you been!”

“Sorry Mom,” Midoriya clings tightly to the back of his mother’s shirt, hugging her back. “There was a big hero, villain fight. Everyone went into a big panic and I lost my phone in it. I was there when it broke out and stayed to give some officers a statement.” He breathes out the lie, acid burning in throat. “There ended up being a big crowd and the police had a bunch of streets blocked off and everything was just an absolute mess and I got lost.”

He lets his head fall onto the woman’s shoulder, eyes open and staring down at his feet. His whole story is a lie this time, the story boiling like tar at the back of his throat. He lets his eyes fall closed, clinging tighter to the woman when he starts thinking about the truth of what happened.

Carved into the back of eyelids rests the image of the little girl, red irises flooded with such a deep hurt that made his heart clench with pain so intense that it felt physical. Tears build in his eyes, splattering unnoticed onto his shoes.

Inko slowly unwinds herself from him, grabbing him by the shoulders as he shoves his tears back. She searches him for wounds, and upon not seeing any visible ones, pulls him into another quick hug.

“I’m just glad you’re okay,” she whispers in his ear before letting go and ushering him through the door.

The fifteen year old can feel acid crawling up his throat. Because even if *he’s* okay, even if *he’s* alright, *she* isn’t.

“Sorry Tsukauchi-san, there wasn’t anyone on site when we got here.”

Naomasa sighs, running a hand through his hair. “It’s fine, it was only a hunch, it could be that he hasn’t been here for hours.” The man looks around the area, searching for any clue of what had gone on here. But there’s nothing.

Just ahead of him Naomasa watches as Sansa’s mouth parts slightly. “I definitely smell copper,” the feline reports, turning towards the detective. “It’s faint, but it’s there. If it hadn’t rained the crime scene would probably be in better shape. We might’ve even had DNA.” Tamakawa’s tail twitches in agitation. “I feel like we’re always close, biting at his heels. But, we’re never able to draw blood before he disappears again.”

Tsukauchi glances at the surrounding buildings. “Spread out, check to see if there are any security cameras that might’ve caught what happened.”

In the end they come back with only one set of footage from a building across the street from the location Piper given them. The video is a little grainy and there isn’t any audio, but it’s the best shred of evidence that anything had even happened there outside of the vigilante’s testimony.

Naomasa sits at his desk, rewatching the footage as his brows twists up in confusion. “So the girl runs out scared,” Tsukauchi states, “Presumably the bald quirk user he mentioned. Piper fights him off, gets beat up. And, then the girl *willingly* leaves with the bald figure.”

Tamakawa hums in acknowledgement, “Since Piper was fighting to defend her it’s possible she went with the man to prevent anything worse from happening to him.”

Naomasa sighes, pinching at the bridge of his nose. “Did the facial scans bring anything up on the bald guy?”

Tamakawa’s whiskers twitch. “No, we got a pretty clear shot of his face, so whoever he is he’s not registered in any police databases.”

Tsukauchi grimaces. “What about the quirk database? Is there anything similar to his that pulled a match?”

“There are a lot of registered crystallization quirks, unfortunately it’d take a long time to go through all of them and match names to faces.”

Tsukauchi’s headache grows. “What about the guy that picked Piper up after the fight?”

The feline nods, sliding a file he’d pulled across the conference desk they’d set up at. “We did get a match, but I don’t think you’re going to like who it is.”

Naomasa flips it open, quickly scanning through all the information. “You’re telling me fully fledged villain grabbed him?”

Sansa shifts in his seat, offering the man a solemn nod. “Unfortunately. From the footage we can’t actually tell if the villain was there to help him or because the bald guy called him to clean up

his mess. But, either way Piper called you several hours after everything had taken place, and he was seemingly fine. So, that points to the possibility that Piper was working with him. He was on the phone before he passed out as well. The best conclusion we can make is that Piper called the guy to pick him up."

Naomasa props a hand on his chin, staring tiredly at the folder in front of him. "That just doesn't fit Piper's m.o. he'd be more likely to turn the guy in than work with him. And, just looking at this file, it doesn't fit this Lui guy's m.o. either. He's more of a loner. So him working for either of the sides in this just don't fit."

"Piper was bleeding and unconscious when Lui picked him up, so there's no way he'd have been able to fight the guy off either." Naomasa rubs at his temples. "None of this end part is making sense. Bringing Lui in is the only way I can really think of to help us figure this out. Knowing what side Lui was working to help, and whether he was the one Piper called last night or not. I don't know if it would help in the long run, but it's information we could use."

It'd been a little less than twenty-four hours since Piper's call, and he'd spent a good majority of time he could've used for sleep watching through different surveillance footage. He'd crashed on Misaki's couch since it was closer than his own home and had woken up at six to do it all over again.

Tsukauchi gently lays his head down on the table. "Not to mention that we know for a fact that he's seen an unconscious Pied Piper up close. If he could give us a better description that alone could end up being a game changer. Piper wasn't in his usual vigilante clothes, so…" Naomasa groans, tugging at his hair. "It's so hard to think on only four hours of sleep."

"If you're not careful there you'll be going bald before too long," Tamakawa teases.

"I already found a gray hair last week," Tsukauchi murmurs, the off handed comment drawing a small laugh from the other man. Sansa offers the detective a small smile, watching as he slowly unravels his fingers from his hair.

"You've been working hard Tsukauchi-san, take a break, go home, get some actual sleep. I'll have someone to send out an alert to bring Lui in if anyone sees him."

Tsukauchi finally sits back up, sliding the folder back toward Sansa as

the feline stands, picking it up. “Get pictures of the little girl and the bald guy as well, have them sent to all the officers doing patrol and have them on the lookout. And, email some copies to the local hero agencies as well.”

“Of course,” Tamakawa assures him. “Now, go get some actual sleep Detective. The rest of us can handle this until tomorrow.” The two of them pause at Tsukachi’s desk, waiting for him to gather a few of his things before they head towards the elevator. “From here on out most of what we’ll be doing is just another waiting game after all.”

The duo waits from the lift to ascend, watching as the number on the floor indicator slowly changes. “I hate waiting games.”

The officer glances over towards him, softly bobbing his head in agreement. “We all do.”

Chapter End Notes

> And that's it for another chapter! I hope you all enjoyed! I know I haven't been responding to comments as much, but I still read all of them! They make me smile and give me motivation to keep writing! Until next week my friends!

Ablation

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Inko eventually releases the fifteen year old from her smothering, the boy is more than ready to whip out his replacement phone from Giran and dial Tsukauchi like he'd meant to do all those hours ago. He's thankful to the broker for saving him, but a simple misclick had left him indebted to the man. And, even though Giran had told him otherwise, it's entirely possible that his identity had been revealed to who knows how many people at this point.

Midoriya is exhausted, his injuries throbbing and head pounding out a steady beat.

In his mind the maw pries itself open, roaring out his failures and shortcomings at a near deafening decimal. They reverberate inside his skull, tearing him apart in ways that he'll never become accustomed to.

Midoriya closes his bedroom door softly behind him, quietly leaning his back against it. Tears slip unbidden from his eyes, unable to be held back any longer now that he's found himself within the secluded confines of his room. Izuku's knees wobble and he lowers himself to the ground to prevent them from collapsing beneath him unwillingly.

The fifteen year old wants to ugly cry as he slides his new phone from Giran out, staring at the number pad through blurred eyes. His thumbs hovers over the numbers, searching for something that he won't find there.

I don't know Tsukauchi's number.

Midoriya's hand falls limply to the floor, phone held loosely between his fingers as a quiet sob bubbles it's way up from his throat.

The fifteen year old can't find it in himself to pull himself up and trek all the way to the older boy's apartment, not with his wounds the way they are, not with his mind fragmenting the way it is. Izuku's heart clenches painfully in his chest. Reo is the only one who knows of his secret, the only one he'd be able to cry in front of without people asking questions he'd never be able to answer truthfully.

He's almost tempted to slip down from their apartment's balcony and run the entire way there. But, his body knows before his mind does that he'd never be able to make the journey there.

Midoriya hauls himself up, grabbing onto any available furniture he can to help him stand before stumbling towards his bed and curling up in the sheets. The position aggravates his wounds, but past the signals of pain, a voice whispers quietly at the back of his mind that this is suitable punishment after tonight's unrivaled failure.

Izuku curls into himself further, crying silently into the dark until he falls unsolicited into unconsciousness.

For once Midoriya sleeps through his nightly patrol, mind and body completely shutting down until his school alarm signals the coming of a new day. His entire body feels like an overworked muscle, and his sun wavers in his chest like the last flickering flames of a dying star.

The hot water from his shower washes away most of the physical remnants of his nightmare ordeal. But, there would never be water hot enough to erase the mental scars the night before had carved into him.

Midoriya looks down at himself, searching for wounds that no longer exists.

"Are you okay?"

"You're not hurt, are you?"

"T-That must've been scary right?"

"I need to protect you, okay? I need you to go hide."

Izuku clenches his hands, just barely restraining himself from slamming the side of the fist he makes into the bathroom wall.

These were the hands that had failed to save her, that had failed to grasp those thin fingers that had reached out to him so desperately, yearning to be saved. So desperate and yet not so much so that she wouldn't leave with her captor just to save him. He who was supposed to save being rescued by the one who needed rescuing.

More tears blur the edges of his vision. He's tired of crying. But, all he can do is cry more.

School drags on unbearably, the boy unable to see the point behind learning mathematics and history and science when there's a little girl out there being held captive. He can't stand being in this place, around these people. Their whispers are pointless, their worry insignificant when compared to the fear he had seen in Eri's vermilion eyes.

His gaze catches Bakugou's form from across the room, his own crimson eyes just barely visible from this angle. His feet are propped on his desk, brows drawn downwards in a scowl. But, for once it isn't burning disgust that he catches in the blonde's eyes, it's fear. Midoriya stares as the boy's hair turns white before his eyes, growing longer and slipping down his back like thin strands of spider silk.

The other teen turns to look at him, the mirage dissolve at the sneer that rises to the Bakugou's lips. "Deku." Izuku flinches back at the name, snapping out of his illusion. "The hell are you staring at broccoli brains?"

Midoriya's glances away, sinking further into his seat.

Indeed school was dragging on unbearably. As much as he'd slept last night he'd still woken up exhausted, plagued by half remembered nightmares of Eri's outreached hand. There's nothing more he wants to do at that moment than go home and sleep, but the burden weighing him down is a hefty one. And the only one who might be able to help relieve some of it should also be counting down the hours until school's out.

Midoriya scales the fire escape silently, his knock nearly inaudible to anyone who hadn't been waiting for the sound of it after the vigilante had stopped replying to any of the messages sent his way

Reo is up and out of his seat as soon as the noise registers, dragging the vigilante through his window and engulfing him in a tight hug as soon as his shoes are off. "I thought you were dead! You weren't answering my texts!"

"I'm sorry," Midoriya mumbles uncomfortably into his shoulder, "Both of my phones kind of broke and I couldn't remember your number." The two step back from each other, falling into their usual spots, Izuku on the bed and Reo in his desk chair. "I would've come earlier, but…" Izuku finds it easier to lift his shirt and expose the unbadged wound.

Tsukauchi rolls his chair closer, studying it. The seventeen year old's eyes darken, finding Midoriya's downcast ones. "This wound should've healed a long time ago Midoriya."

The grip the younger boy has on his shirt tightens. "It did." The vigilante prepares himself for the mess of a story he's about tell. His heart already aching terribly before he's even said a word. "I ran into a little girl."

Tsukauchi listens to everything quietly, interjecting questions and exclamations when he feels it necessary. When Midoriya finally finishes talking his chest feels a little lighter. He'd told the detective some of what had happened the night before, but certainly not to the full extent of everything that he'd just told his nephew.

"So, who stitched your wound then? You said you passed out, was it some good Samaritan or something? It looks pretty surgical." Reo's eyes widen. "Did someone take you to a hospital?"

The younger boy sighs. "No, no hospitals. And, I don't know who did it, it was someone Giran brought in." Midoriya gently scratches at the back of his head. "Before I passed out I tried calling you. There were only two numbers on that phone, yours and Giran's, so I assume accidentally called him instead. Though I guess everything worked out for the best in the end. I don't know what *you* would've done. I don't think I even told Giran where I was, he had to get someone to track me."

Tsukauchi's eyes widen at all of the new information. "The creepy broker guy saved you?"

Midoriya nods his head reluctantly, eyes distractedly roaming his friend's desk for new inventions.

Reo sighs, "I'm glad you're alright though. If we're being honest I probably would've ended up calling my uncle if I hadn't been able to find you." Midoriya sends him a slightly betrayed glance. "Don't look at me like that! I wouldn't let you die just to make sure your secret is safe. Not to mention you told me you weren't even in uniform! It's not like he would've recognized you as Piper… probably."

Izuku huffs a quiet laugh before his mood falls again, turning serious. "She's still out there."

Reo offers the boy a comforting smile. "Leave it to my uncle, Midoriya. He'll find her."

But, the fifteen year old finds no comfort in the uptilt of the older boy's lips. "He wouldn't need to if I'd managed to save her."

Reo's smile drops into a frown. "There was nothing more you could've done."

"There was."

"There wasn't," his friend insists, "You said so yourself. Midoriya you literally could've from blood loss."

"You don't understand Tsukauchi," Izuku's voice takes on a desperate tone, "She was *right there*!" His voice cracks as he glances down at his hands, his fingers shaking underneath the weight of his failures.

"I do understand Midoriya," Reo soothes quietly, rolling his chair closer to the bed. "I understand that you tried your best. You fought that guy and when you couldn't beat him you called my uncle as soon as you could. There wasn't anything else you could've done aside from *dying* ."

More tears burn at the corners of his eyes because Reo *doesn't* understand. He doesn't feel the roaring of the tide swelling within the fifteen year old's chest. He doesn't feel how the waves press down on his lungs or his heart, he doesn't feel just how burdensome the weight of simply *knowing* that he could've done better, that he could've fought harder, fought smarter. He should've run the moment he'd seen that man coming, should've picked Eri up and rushed her to safety. But, instead he'd relied on himself, had relied on quirkless little Deku with too big of a heart and too small of a sense of self preservation.

And *that* is something Tsukauchi Reo would *never* understand.

The older boy lets him cry though, the fifteen year old's water works starting back up. He lets him run through his emotions and is there to comfort him. Comforting someone had never required a deeper sense of the situation, only a kind heart and a willing ear. And, that's what Tsukauchi offers Midoriya now.

Misaki peaks into the room at one point, the words she had come prepared to speak dying on her lips when she takes in the scene. She catches Reo's gaze when he turns his head to look back at her. The other boy's mass of green curls pressed into her son's chest.

There's a silent question that burns in her eyes, asking if there's anything she can do, but Reo gently shakes his head, turning her

away.

He mouths an inaudible “he’ll be fine” before she nods and quietly shuts the door again with the fifteen year old none the wiser of her appearance.

But, the silently spoken words rest uneasy on the seventeen year old’s lips. Because, though neither of them would have been able to know it at the time, Midoriya would not be fine. Not until he’d saved that girl from whatever living nightmares she’d been afflicted with. Not until he’d rescued her, not until he’d redeemed himself.

Azametrizinthos reblogged Baby_Shark_du

SharkLords:

Hi everyone! So this may be a little weird, but me and a few of my friends all live in Musutafu’s 5th district (you know the really bad one shdghdcj) and as some of you may know the vigilante Pied Piper has been running around helping over here for a long time now. And with me being in the area I’ve heard quite a few rumors about the guy (never actually met him, but that’s not important). He’s been asking around a lot about some Yakuza group (the 8 percents or something stupid like that???) Anyway, I've got a lot of followers on this account so idk??? If you guys have any information about them that could help I’ll try and pass it onto the guy if I can

If you don’t have any info then RBs are appreciated!

KirishiMom:

You mean the 8 Precepts of Death? I think they’re the guys with those weird bird masks

I’ve seen a few running around the 4th district but I haven’t really

seen them doing anything shady???

falqner:

My brother used to be apart of the group until their old boss got sick and someone new took over

He won't tell me why he left just that "the new guy is a monster in human skin". After that he moved to Australia and refuses to talk about anything related to it…..

gettingbi_kinda:

KirishiMom said it was people with bird masks, does that mean like those rubber pigeon ones?? Because I saw a dude running around downtown Musutafu in one of those with his junk out

Highly disturbing, but when I think about it's probably not the "move to Australia to get away from him" type

KirishiMom:

JAJSKAJSK I MEANT LIKE ARTISTIC LOOKING BEAK MASKS

I KNOW THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A SERIOUS POST BUT I'M ACTUALLY LAUGHING SO HARD LKSJBFGKLBDFS

Mirokus-Right-Thigh-Muscle:

I've seen some beak mask dudes hovering around this old building I pass on my way to work? I don't know if it's the same people but they certainly look sketchy

The building is in the 7th district over on the south side of Hasu park (the one with the dog park attached) It looks like regular old house, it's pretty small, pale blue, and it has a more westernised architecture.

SharkLords:

Uhhhhhhh this actually got a lot more attention than I thought it would, so if anyone actually meets Piper make sure you try and pass on any information shared in this thread!

Except maybe leave out the pigeon mask thing (ˆ—ˆ;)

#Piper has done a lot for the area so idk #ive been wanting to help him out and this is what I came up with #Pied Piper #vigilante #musutafu #help us track these assholes down #idk what they did but it got Piper's attention to its gotta be bad #8 precepts #bump

11,594 notes

Midoriya rubs at his temples, taking a step back to look at the mess of information taped to the back of his closet wall. It'd been a month since he'd first encountered Eri, three months since he'd started his investigation into Kogane Gizō, and six months since the man had originally disappeared. And, despite how much time had passed, Izuku was no closer to finding either of them than when he'd started, most of the trails that he could've followed in the beginning having long since dissipated. There'd been no word from the detective either, no way for him to tell if they'd even opened an investigation after his call. Even Reo had been unable to give him any insight into what was happening.

"He complains about you getting away a lot, but other than that he doesn't really talk about work."

Midoriya curses, sliding his clothes back into place and slamming the closet door shut, thankful, for the first time, that Inko was out working late.

He paces the length of his room, wearing down a trail into the wood with his bare feet. The vigilante tugs at his curls in frustration. “Where are they! They didn’t just disappear. People don’t just disappear!” He wants to call someone to vent his frustrations to, someone who would understand. But, there’s no one, no one who would understand, no one who would get it, no one who has felt the feelings he has boiling underneath his skin. They burn like acid, boil like tar. They pierce him like the crystals of Hojo Yu’s quirk.

Because they’d pierced him, they’d gone right through his hand even if he didn’t have the scars to show for it. He’d stared into the red eyes of a little girl who’d been privy to the sight of death and there was no way for him to prove it.

Since his first encounter with the girl he’d gone a vigilantism rampage, taking down villain after villain and asking all of them the same question, *“What do you know about the Eight Precepts?”* But, *all* the answers he got were just reiterations of the same thing. It’s either “Who?” or “I don’t know” or it’s information he’d already heard long ago. Out of all of the work that he’s doing, all of it, all of it ends up useless.

Sansa quickly pushes himself up from his seat, staring wide-eyed at Naomasa as he hurriedly throws his desk phone back on its receiver. “They brought that Lui guy in on a minor shoplifting charge.”

The detective looks up, staring at the feline. The confusion is clear on his face until the name registers in his head and Tsukauchi quickly follows suit in pushing himself up. “Get him in an interrogation room as soon as possible. I need anything and everything he knows about Piper.”

Naomasa watches from behind the interrogation room’s two way mirror as Lui is dragged in by an officer. He’s a thin, rail like man with a nose that looks more suited for a bear. His hair is coarse and his fingernails look more like the claws of an animal when he begins tapping them restlessly against the metallic table.

Sansa gives him an encouraging pat on the back. “Go get him Detective.”

Tsukauchi makes his entrance casual, gently placing the manila folder in his hand on the table as he takes a seat.

Lui speaks first, “Why am I in here? I thought I was just in on a shoplifting case. Which,” He exclaims, “is a false accusation. The shop owner an’ I simply had a disagreement about the price of something. I didn’t *steal* anything.”

“I’m here to talk to you about the vigilante going by the name Pied Piper, Lui-san.”

“Piper?” The man asks, suddenly looking confused. “Why are you asking me about him? I've never met the guy.”

Noamasa frowns when his quirk doesn't register a lie. “Two months ago. We have footage of you picking him up off the sidewalk after a pretty brutal fight.”

Lui’s eyes narrow in further confusion before they snap open again, widening comically. “Wait, that kid was Piper? Like, *the Piper* ?”

The look Naomasa sends the man communicates a silent question.

A sheen of sweat forms above the man’s brow. “If words gets out I helped him my business will tank!” Lui glances back up at the detective. “Which is a *perfectly* legal trade, might I add. But, I swear I didn’t know it was him. I owed someone a favor and he called it in in two months back. My quirk gives me a really good sense of smell,” he explains, awkwardly gesturing at his nose with his hands still cuffed to the table. “They guy called me and gave a general location to search and told me to follow the smell of blood and pick up whoever was at the end of it was. I dropped the kid off at his place and that was the last I saw of him. I ain’t got nothing to do with Piper.”

Tsukauchi lips twitch downward, “Who is guy you owed a favor to?”

Lui frowns. “I don’t snitch on people Mr. Detective, so you won’t be gettin’ any names out of me.”

Naomasa lets out an internal sigh, flipping the criminal’s file open. “No names then, how about a description? Is he bald?”

Lui looks offended on the mystery man’s behalf. “Hey, now. The

dude's gettin' on in age, but he's certainly ain't bald."

So there was a possible fourth party involved? The detective sends a glance towards the two way mirror.

"What about Piper? I'm sure he's been caught infringing on your ' *perfectly legal trade* ' before. I'm sure you want him off the streets just as much as I do. Can you tell me what he looked like? Or what happened that night? Excluding anything about the man you owed a favor to of course."

Lui looks unsure, questioning whether those are questions that he's allowed to answer since by all accounts Piper *should* be his enemy. "It's been awhile, and my memory isn't too great you know."

Naomasas feels a bud of relief bloom in his chest. "Anything helps."

"Well," the man starts, voice still unsure, "Like I said I got that call. But, it was raining, so I was worried that I wouldn't be able to find him," he explains, "But, the stench of copper was *really* strong and I actually found him pretty quick. He was bleeding all over the place, though. It was all over his hands and soaking his shirt and his head was bleeding everywhere too, I thought he might've cracked his skull open or somethin'." Lui gestures vaguely towards his own forehead. "He had a mask on of course so I couldn't really see his face, and his eyes were closed with him being unconscious and all. He was young though, nothing but a teenager. I remember bein' surprised."

"What about his hair?" Naomasa prompts, desperate for any new information that they could get.

Lui makes to think about it. "Um, it was a dark color? It was dark and rainy so all his hair was laid flat from the water and stuff."

Tsukauchi curses internally. "What about what he was wearing? Did it have any symbols? Any logos? Did he have anything with him?"

"I don't remember, he was just wearing a plain looking t-shirt and some workout shorts. He had a backpack and some phones with him, but that was it, I dropped all of those off with him."

This was getting them nowhere, everything the man was telling him was stuff that they'd already heard before. *I need to backtrack.* "The guy you were talking about earlier, why did he want you to bring him Piper? Are they friends?"

Lui's eyes narrow, but he eventually shakes his head. "Him and Piper? That's nigh impossible. When I asked who he was when I dropped the kid off, do you know what he told me?" The man's eyes crinkle with amusement. "He called him a future investment," Lui lets out a laugh, "I can't wait to see how that turns out."

Naomasa steps out of the interrogation room, ten times as tired than when he'd first gone in. Interrogation rooms always seemed to suck the life out of him, especially when the topic of conversation inside happened to revolve around a certain vigilante.

They hadn't found out much, yet another lead leaving them at a dead end. The only information that they had gained was that the thin web of people connecting to Piper had grown a few more strings.

"Good work in there Tsukauchi-san." Sansa approaches him from the side. "You didn't send us any signals so I assume Lui-san didn't lie?"

"Not once," the detective confirms, waving for one of the officers standing guard outside the room to escort Lui away. "It was a little frustrating to be honest."

"This whole case is a little frustrating I'm afraid," Sansa inputs as they make a beeline for the break room. Tsukauchi was desperate for a boost from a pot of the department's terrible instant coffee.

"Piper has been gaining notoriety with the public since his encounter with Death Arms," the detective sighs, "And, that whole Endeavor encounter that happened a few months ago only made it worse."

The feline nods. "I'm worried the chief will have our heads if we don't handle this quickly," he murmurs as they pass by one of their superiors, giving the woman a brief nod of acknowledgment.

Naomasa makes a noise of agreement. "Not to mention how worried I am about Piper. From the way Lui was talking the kid could've died. I'm glad that he's at least got someone to patch him up, but the way that guy worded it, " *future investment* ". It's got me anxious."

Tamakawa nods in agreement. "Most of our leads are running dry, so we can only really hope for the best now. "

Tsukauchi lets out a long suffering sigh. "Yet another waiting game."

Chapter End Notes

And that's it for this week's chapter! I hope you all enjoyed! I've been slacking in the comment section, I read all of them, so I'll try replying to some soon! Thank you all for the love and support and I'm so glad that you are all enjoying this fic as much as I am!
I'm sure some of you are starting back to school soon if you haven't already. My classes start up next week, but I'm hoping the extra work won't slow down my update schedule (I kind of overloaded myself this semester lmao). But, I wish you all luck on your academic endeavors, and I'll see you next Tuesday!

Aphelion

Chapter Notes

Hi Ho everyone! Before we get into the chapter I would like to inform everyone that Pied Piper now has an official Discord server of its own thanks to my dear friend Ashe!
The server is now up and running and is open to my readers! If there is anyone that is interested in joining feel free to dm me on tumblr(blackholeca) or Ashe(lunarecrypt) on twitter!

Without further ado! Let's get right into it!

TW:// Major Character Death

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It had gotten a lot colder in the last few months, with winter beginning to wrap it's icy claws around Musutafu. Midoriya had tried to put the creeping cold out of his mind, but he hadn't been able to keep still during his patrols else he freeze. His original vigilante uniform was meant for warmer months and therefore allowed the boy very little protection from November's dropping temperatures.

But, doing something about it without wrapping himself in three different hoodies meant calling Giran again, something that the boy had been avoiding for the last two months. The broker had still yet to call in the favor that the vigilante owed him, and as time passed Midoriya had grown increasingly worried about it. He knew that the man wouldn't soon forget about the debt the boy owed, but not interacting with the broker made it feel like he had.

But, Midoriya needed a winter uniform, and to do that he'd have to go through Giran if he wanted something even remotely good enough to match the quality of the gear he has now.

The vigilante sighs, he'd been putting it off long enough. He wouldn't survive doing patrols like this, it split his attention between his bodily needs and everything else around him. Which, was a dangerous position to put himself into. The fifteen year old pulls out his phone, reluctantly finding the man's contact.

"Piper," Giran drawls over the speaker. "I must say it's been a while.

You haven't been avoiding me have you?" On the other side of the phone a cheshire smile slips into place unseen.

Izuku grimaces. *He really hit that one on the head, didn't he?* "Not at all, I just haven't needed anything. Not to mention that I've been busy."

"So I've heard," the broker huffs a laugh, "Ruining the lives of criminal scum, yes?"

Midoriya lets a smirk slide into place.

"Vigilante extraordinaire, it's in the job description."

Giran offers his empty office a gap-toothed smirk. "So, you said you hadn't called because you didn't need anything. I assume that's changed?" The man leans back in his seat, eyes aimlessly roaming the room.

"It's gotten colder recently," Piper says instead of an actual answer.

"It's *been* cold," Giran corrects him.

On the other side of the line the vigilante grimaces, choosing to the skirt the statement. "I was thinking that it's about time for me to get some warmer gear."

"Ah— I was wondering when you'd call about that. That stuff you have now is meant to keep you cool so I was wondering how you were holding up."

"Aw~ You weren't worried about me were you?" Piper teases.

"Of course I was. Not only do *you* give me money. But, every time someone new comes in they're all Piper this and Piper that, and Piper threw my brother in jail, and Piper threw *me* in jail." Giran lets out a quiet laugh. "You're great villain incentive."

The vigilante huffs a breath through his nose, a half smile rising to his lips. "Glad to know business is booming for you Giran. Now… I was thinking of another hoodie. Something with a similar material. You were right about this stuff holding up really well…"

By Akihito Jun

November 29, 2231

If you're familiar with my writing then you will know that this is not my first time bringing up the topic of vigilantes, nor even my first time mentioning this one specifically. But, this is most certainly my first article where you will find me addressing the topic of vigilantism so directly.

By now many of you may have heard of the name Pied Piper as it's being spoken in relation to Musutafu's newest vigilante. Or, at the very least, heard of some of the things that he has accomplished. Now, while I in no way support or condone the actions of this individual, seeing how he so clearly stands outside of the law. I feel that it is necessary to explore the topic of his accomplishments and what they in turn mean for our community at large.

Pied Piper has been considered an active vigilante for well over half a year now. But, it wasn't until June of this year that he truly began rising in popularity. The cause of his sudden notoriety being due to a video depicting a fight between Piper and a pro hero by the name of Death Arms. Since then there have been dozens of videos and images of the vigilante circulating the internet as more and more people fall in love with the deeds and personality he has displayed.

But, some of you may ask how such an outlawed figure could ever serve as someone to be admired by the public, and my only answer lies within his actions. While Piper's deeds have landed him in the dog house with the law, they've done nothing but land him in the hearts of the public.

If any of you reading this have had time to familiarize yourself with Musutafu, you will understand that not all of its areas are not as dazzling as our tourist advertisements might lead one to believe. And, if you have happened to live in or visit one of these less desirable parts of the city you'll have surely noticed the lessened pro hero foot traffic. Some may find this fact surprising, disturbing even. Some may think that these parts of the city should be patrolled just as much as others, if not more. But, this happening is no different than any other city one could find around the world.

It is because of these unfortunate circumstances that Pied Piper has been given the ability to thrive within the public eye like he has. If

you were to layout a map, and stick pins in the locations of every reported incident Piper was involved in, you would find that much of Piper's acts of vigilantism can be found to take place within and around these underprotected areas that I mentioned above. And, while his actions are wholly illegal. You will find that there are many people who live and work within these areas that are thankful for what Piper has done. They are thankful for the villains that he's stopped, and for the trafficking rings he's helped bring down, and for the overall sense of peace that he has brought to many even if his deeds are considered illegal.

In less than a year Pied Piper has put an end to a multitude of criminals ranging from petty thieves to well known murders, and within the last few months his capture rate has only been going up as his activity spikes. Each new incident earns the young vigilante more notoriety and fame within the community, his popularity rising with it everyday.

And, the fact that this outlaw has become so supported within the communities that he is helping delivers to us a silent message, one that speaks more loudly than words ever could. With every life he saves, with every criminal he puts behind bars, Piper reminds us that there exists a void, one that must be filled. Piper is not the first to have seen it, nor is he the first to have taken note of the dwindling number of heroes protecting these crime ridden areas. And, neither is he the first to see it and take action against it outside of the law. But, he is one of the first and only people to have taken frequent and continuous action against it, for the betterment of those around him, and at the risk of his own life.

Perhaps you will find me strange for saying this, but I have hope that Piper will inspire others within our community and those around the world to follow in his footsteps. I have hope that, after receiving the proper training and certifications, perhaps others will study the precedent he has set and return to help the areas that his mere existence draws our eyes back towards.

I believe that Piper's presence sends a message out to everyone who is watching. A message which exists to inform others that there exists a gap, a void, one that Piper will never be able to fill alone. This man acts as a beacon, drawing others into these crime ridden areas with the silent message that 'there are still people to protect here'.

I have not been able to come to a firm conclusion of what his existence means for our community, but one thing is certain. The

people here feel safer now more than ever, they feel protected, they feel remembered. And, while everyone may not agree on Pied Piper's methods, no one can deny the astounding effect he has had on the local communities.

© 2231 Musutafu Hero Reporting, a division

of Musutafu Daily Network, LLC.

A week after the vigilante had placed his order, he once again arrives at the broker's nondescript warehouse. There's another wad of cash tucked into his cargo pants and a dam of worry slowly building within his chest.

Giran glances up when the boy appears. "Piper," the man drawls when he sees the vigilante leaning in his office's doorway. "I've gotta say you look comparatively better than the last time I saw you."

The vigilante's eyes crinkle slightly at the corners, hinting at the dangerous smile hidden beneath his mask. "I would hope so."

The broker leans back in his seat as Piper slips into the room, taking a seat at one of the chairs positioned in front of the man's desk. "I hear you've amped up your search for that Yakuza group over the last few months," Giran mentions casually.

The boy raises a brow. "What of it?"

Giran's eyes narrow behind his glasses, but he keeps an easy smile in place. "I underestimated them. They've been slowly gaining power as of late. They've become more dangerous."

The vigilante breathes a sigh. "That won't change anything for me." The boy's own pied eyes narrow with malice for the group. "I don't know the full extent of what they've done. But, it's *unforgivable.* " Midoriya spits out the word like a curse, acid building in his throat when he remembers the look in that girl's eyes. Much of that night's memories had begun fading as time passed. But, those vermilion eyes had been burned into the backs of his eyelids. They kept dragging him back into the same nightmares, but they also kept him surging forward, desperate for clues as to where she'd been taken.

Is she even still alive? His heart stutters in his chest, the voice in his

head taking advantage of his sudden weakness, tar slick maw pulling into a cheshire grin.

“ *If only you had managed to save her,* ” the voice intones, “ *Maybe then she would still be alive.* ”

The vigilante’s hands clench in his lap as Giran watches on in mild interest.

“ *Well, you can’t save everyone after all* ,” it hums, “ *She’ll just be another casualty of this despicable world that you’re trying so foolishly to save.* ”

Midoriya shakes his head, trying to dispel the voice. *I can’t afford to think that she’s dead. The Eight Precepts haven’t been shown to kidnap people without a reason. She must be important to them.*

“I’m not letting them go unpunished,” the boy informs Giran, resolve hardening. *Whether she’s alive or not. I won’t let them go unpunished.*

“So,” the broker starts, “You’ll be going after them no matter what I say?”

“I’ll be going after them no matter what anyone says Giran.”

The man sighs, “I might as well tell you then. I’m sure you would’ve found out about it eventually anyway. And, there’s no reason for me to *not* tell you… I’m just speeding up the process a little bit.”

Midoriya’s brows furrow. “What the hell are you talking about?”

Giran’s pink eyes bore into the vigilante’s. “There’s a post that’s been circulating on the internet as of late. I’ve been keeping my eye on it.”

“Why are you trying to tell me about some internet post?”

“Because Piper,” Giran drawls with just a hint of sarcasm, “You’re one of my precious customers.”

The fifteen year old leans back in his seat, cautiously eyeing the villain. “What post?”

The man breathes a sigh, pulling out one of his phones to send the vigilante a link. “I’m going to have to destroy this phone now you know.”

Midoriya feels his own device vibrate in his pocket and pulls it out to carefully inspect the message.

“It’s got possible info on the Eight Precepts whereabouts,” Giran tells him quietly.

The boy’s head whips up to gape at the broker before quickly tapping on the link to read through the post.

“Technically I wasn’t the one to give you the info. I’m just making you aware of its existence.” Giran looks at the boy over the tops of his glasses. “You’ve impacted a lot of people out there. Most people aren’t bold enough to take action themselves, so when someone else does so outside of the law people respect that, people respect *you*. If anyone asks *that* is how you got this info.” Giran raises is hands, feigning a surrender gesture. “I had nothing to do with it.”

Midoriya can feel the backs of his eyes burning. *This is a lead* . And maybe it wasn’t a good one, maybe it would turn out to be nothing, maybe it would lead him nowhere. But, it gave him something to do other than chase after shadows. His months of searching had yielded him little to no results. He’d chased down bad guy after bad guy, asking them question after question. He’d thought that all of it had gotten him nowhere. But, the people had been watching, listening. They’d seen what he was doing, had heard what he was looking for. All those months he’d been building up his reputation, building up the respect the people of Musutafu had for him, the vigilante Pied Piper, the quirkless Deku.

He holds back his tears, if only because he’s still sitting in front of a villian.

Midoriya sets out for the 7th district immediately after slipping on his new gear. He pulls open his gps and types Hasu Park in the address bar, following the path that it has laid out for him.

The boy studies the swatch of green labeled ‘Hasu Park’ on his phone, the fifteen year old turning in place. He looks up, taking in his surroundings. “Which way is South though?” Izuku murmurs quietly, gazing jumping from place to place. “I wish they could’ve given me a more specific location, a block number at the very least.” Midoriya shakes his head venomously, he couldn’t afford to be picky in this situation. This was the first genuine bit of information that could lead him to Eri’s location. There was a possibility, for the first time in months, that he could save her *tonight* and have her in police custody come morning.

The vigilante tries to settle his suddenly racing heart, excited at the prospect of finally seeing the girl safe.

All I need to do is find the house.

He can't find the house.

He'd been wandering the area for hours now, carefully studying every house that he passed. It was hard to tell some colors apart in the dark, because of this he was left staring prolongedly at white houses that looked gray, but could also be a light blue. There are a lot of houses, Midoriya comes to realize, that could pass as pale blue if only he had better lighting to check.

The hope that he had started his search out with was slowly dwindling. The vigilante pauses to study another ambiguously colored house.

" *Why did you think you could save her? Why did you think you can save everyone with just an extra push of hard work?* " The voice in his head laughs, taunting him. " *You know she's already dead, right? You missed your chance to save her long ago. You failed her.* "

Midoriya grits his teeth, marching forward to get a closer look at the building. "I know I failed her," he grinds out, "I don't need you to tell me I've fucked up every time I fuck up. I *know* when I mess up, I *know* when I fail. I knew I ruined my chance the moment I ruined it." The fifteen year old turns away from the house, deeming it an unsuitable match. "You don't need to tell me."

Midoriya stares ahead of him defiantly, turning the corner to continue his search. But, there's a man there, walking down the street. He's facing away from him, but the sight sending the vigilante scrambling back around the corner to hide.

He presses himself back against the brick fencing. This was the first person he'd seen in the area.

Midoriya peeks his head around the corner, trying to take in the man's appearance when his head shifts and the vigilante is privy to a glint of gold in the overhead glow of a street lamp. The tip of a beak-like mask the man is wearing flashes in the dark like a hazard beacon trying to ward him away.

But, Izuku would not be warded away, because it was one of them, one of the Eight Precepts, it had to be. It was a different man this time, not the one he'd first fought. This man is thinner, not as muscular, and on his head rests a crown of short, dark, shaggy hair. His back is to the boy, a wreath of purple fur collaring the jacket that he's donned.

The man twists his head around further, the rest of his body moving with him as he looks in the boy's direction. The vigilante eyes widen, disappearing back around the corner, but he doesn't retreat fast enough, his head whipping back around the wall seconds too late.

Piper leans his back against the corner's brick fencing, breathing out a curse under his breath as his heart rate spikes. Unless the man has a quirk that would prevent him from doing so, it'd be easy enough for Midoriya to disappear into suburbs maze-like system of streets and alleys. But, the man is a clue in his own right, a possible way for him to find out where Eri is. The best option would've been for the vigilante to tail the man. But, he'd already been seen and with as late as it was and as suspicious as Midoriya had probably looked there wouldn't be any viable way for him to do that with things as they are now.

I need to diffuse the situation.

Midoriya sets his staff aside, leaning it against the wall for safekeeping as he quickly strips off his gloves and hides his utility belt beneath his new hoodie. *I need to look as non vigilante like as possible while still hiding my identity.* He sucks in a breath, holding it there for a moment before he quietly releases it and steps out.

"Sorry about that! I probably look super sketchy right?" Izuku scratches at the back of his head in mock embarrassment. "I was just thinking that your mask was really cool, and I didn't want to bother you or anything!" Midoriya casually strolls closer to the masked man as he turns to fully face him. "Though, I guess I ended up bothering you anyway, huh? I don't usually see a lot of people out this late around here, so I was a little surprised! Sorry if I spooked you or anything."

The man scrutinizes the other's appearance. "Don't lie to me, boy." The villain's voice is low, dark. It has Midoriya pausing mid stride. This time it's the man who approaches the other, the yakuza member gently slipping off one of the gloves from his hand. Izuku is too busy locked on this man's golden eyes to notice its removal. "I know who

you are."

The man stretches out a hand to the fifteen year old and the boy throws himself back instinctively. But, their fingertips brush against each other's and there's a moment where Midoriya simply stops existing.

He comes back with heaving sobs wracking his frame, brain scrambled and still in pieces. His memories struggling to tape themselves back together. He knows only fear.

There's a man standing before him but the boy can't for the life of him currently remember who it's supposed to be. "I've heard you've been looking for something that belongs to me, *Piper* ."

The vigilante knows only to fear the man, knows like primordial instinct. He throws himself off the ground, up and away from the man, desperate to put distance between himself and the other's hands.

"There's a specific kind of *powerlessness* that radiates off of you."

Midoriya keeps himself low to the ground like some sort of feral animal, hyper aware of any move that the man before him makes. His pied eyes are blown wide with terror and his limbs shake violently beneath him.

"You're the one Hojo met, that's what the police reports said at least. I did some research of my own you see. I have to when someone starts *threatening* my plans. And, during my research I realized something.You're one of the twenty percent, are you not? It's only a guess of course, but if it's true then you're something that this filthy world needs more of; powerless people."

Izuku flinches back at the words, recoiling as if struck.

"Because of that I can't say that I particularly hate you Mr. Vigilante. And, I think that perhaps you'll be useful to me in the future…" The man slips a glove back on his exposed hand like it's the sheath of some dangerous weapon. "But, remember this child, if you come looking for my things again, you'll find that any usefulness you may have once had will have run out. Consider this a warning, Piper."

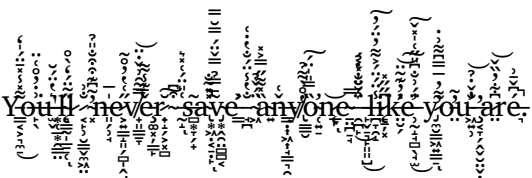
Chisaki Kai turns from the vigilante, staring down at the hand he'd touched him with in disgust as he walks away. *The media has begun to turn its attention onto him. Vigilante's like him reside in a morally gray area that the disease lovers like to fawn over and that the diseased like to chase after. The more popular he becomes the less attention there will be to go around. While he continues to draw the scrutiny of the spotlight, we will fall further into the shadows. The dark is, and will always be, the best place to strike from.* The villain adjusts the sleeves of his coat. *If he loses his nerve after this then we'll see no more of him. If he does not… then may his spotlight grow ever brighter, blinding the likes of those who would even attempt to peer into the shadows.*

Midoriya watches the man walk away, disappearing around a corner through his hazy vision. Every part of the boy is screaming for him to run, to flee. Flee before the man has a chance to come back. So, he does.

He lurches to the side, struggling to bring himself back to his full height as he turns back the way he'd come, shakily retrieving his things before rushing on.

Midoriya stumbles away, breaking apart at the seams. His mind roars with a multitude of voices so loud that they drown at reality, so loud that they drown out each other and bleed into nothing but screams of static. Tears stream uncontrollably down his cheeks as his mind shatters and falls to pieces like the shards of a broken mirror, all of the fragments reflecting the dark void that he'd experienced at the mercy of that man's hands.

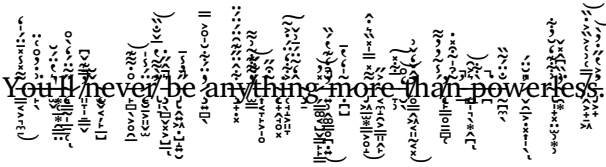
Above the static a voice rises.



Midoriya lurches forward, barely stopping himself from tripping over his own feet.

Powerless.

A broken sob forces its way through his lips.



The boy doesn't stop walking, doesn't stop crying. He pushes himself to the next street, the next block, the next part of the city. He's in a constant state of motion, unable to stand still, unable to stop moving. He's scared of the consequences that inactivity could hold.

Part of him whispers that, *only the dead stop moving* , and Midoriya Izuku was not dead. At least… He wasn't dead anymore.

Despite this the boy does not head home. He *can't* head home, not in the state he's at the moment. So, the fifteen year old flees to the only other place that he *can* go.

At exactly 3:43 AM Midoriya arrives at the top of Reo's fire escape, knocking shakily on the older boy's window. When there's no response he does so again, louder this time. Tsukauchi appears behind the glass a few moments later, hair ruffled and eyes bleary with sleep as he pulls it open with a yawn. "What're you doing here so late? Usually you're asleep by now." Reo steps back, letting the boy in as he switches on the lamp at his desk. The seventeen year old turns back around to see the vigilante step inside with his boots still on. "Dude, come on. Check the shoes."

Izuku doesn't respond, merely kneels down to try and unlace the boots with trembling fingers. Tsukauchi takes immediate notice, sobering up almost instantly to crouch down in front of the boy, worry swirling in his amber eyes. "Midoriya?"

The vigilante doesn't look up, still attempting to unknot the laces on his shoes.

"Midoriya," Reo calls his name softly, "Look at me Midoriya."

Midoriya does not look at him.

Tsukauchi gently places his hands over Izuku's trembling ones, holding them still, ceasing his motion. "Midoriya, are you okay?"

The fifteen year old ignores the question in favor of staring down at their hands.

Only the dead stop moving.

But, Midoriya Izuku was not dead... not anymore.

"I…. I think I died," the boy murmurs quietly, distraught. His voice barely above a whisper until his words begin to take on a more hysterical note, "I think he *killed* me."

Chapter End Notes

> And that's it for this week! I hope you all enjoyed and remember that Pied Piper now has a open discord server so anyone can message me on my twitter or tumblr if they're interested in joining! I'd love to be able to interact and talk with all of you and who knows maybe you'll get some sneak peeks into next week's chapter!
> I love you all! See you all next week (or in the discord server if you join askdfhadsjf)!!!

Absolute Zero

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I…. I think I died,” the boy murmurs quietly, distraught. His voice barely above a whisper until his words begin to take on a more hysterical note, “I think he *killed* me.”

“Wha–” Reo’s brows furrow inward, confusion pulling at his features. “What are you talking about?”

“He killed me,” the fifteen year old repeats, sucking in a sharp breath as he stares down at their overlapping hands.

Tsukauchi’s grip tightens gently, a comforting squeeze, a grounding one. “Midoriya you’re not dead.”

“His quirk, it killed me.”

Reo searches his friend’s face, looking for something that he doesn’t find. “Was it some sort of illusionary quirk? Did he show you your death? Or—”

“No, Tsukauchi.,” Izuku whispers quietly. “I died.” Midoriya finally looks up, gaze latching desperately onto Reo’s. In the younger boy’s eyes the seventeen year old can see where a void has formed, can see where the stars in his eyes had collapsed into black holes. Midoriya’s pupils serve as their singularities, his irises their encompassing accretion disks, one a flaming crimson and the other a blazing jade.

The stars that had once resided within Izuku’s viridescent eyes have come irrevocably undone. And Reo can see how just terribly gravity had crushed them, can see how mercilessly it had forced those stars to collapse. He watches as the black holes pull in all, sucking out the life and hope and joy that had once resided in its place.

Reo finds himself unable to move for a moment, struck by just how terribly haunted Midoriya’s eyes look.

“Y-you’re not hurt are you?”

“No.”

But, Reo can see the way Izuku's limbs tremble and rouses himself into checking the other boy, worried that he might be in shock. He looks for signs of blood or bruises, but finds no more than the vigilante usually has. Tsukauchi looks back up, searching Midoriya's eyes. "Do you want to tell me what happened?" Reo shifts, sitting down on the floor and crossing his legs, Midoriya following his example.

Izuku takes a moment to decide before his mouth parts shakily. "I-I thought I was finally going to get her," he whispers. "I thought I'd finally be able to save her." More tears well in the teen's already red eyes. "But, I fucked it up again," the boy hisses, tears spilling over. "I got some intel about where the Eight Precepts were and I was following up on it."

Reo tenses at the mention of the group's name, watching as crystalline tears slip down Midoriya's flushed cheeks.

"I was just looking around the neighborhood they were supposed to be in and… I ran into one of the members," Izuku's voice shakes, fear bubbling up inside his chest like magma. "Tsukauchi, his quirk…. it-it took me apart. It *killed* me. I wasn't sure what had happened at first, my mind was all in pieces. But… he killed me. I *know* it." Midoriya's voice takes on a hysterical note, hands shaking uncontrollably now. "All he did was brush my fingers." A sob bubbles up through his lips. "And then, and then there was *nothing.*"

Reo wakes up first, rising only a few hours later, the sky just a few shades lighter than it had been when he'd fallen asleep. He could've slept another hour or two before he would've actually needed to be up, but he rouses himself for Midoriya's sake. The boy had ended up staying over for the night, passing out on a futon Reo had pulled from the closet, the fifteen year old too emotionally unstable for the teen to let his friend leave in good conscience. Tsukauchi slowly pushes himself up, staring down at the younger boy through hazy eyes. He's still asleep, breathing quietly, peacefully, too tired to dream. Midoriya had curled into himself sometime during the night, rolling over to face Reo's bed. Tsukauchi's chest aches when he remembers just how distraught the boy had been just hours earlier, how terrified.

The boy's hair is ruffled and the dark circles strung beneath his eyes have never looked so saturated before. But, Reo would be willing to accept both as the new normal as long as the next time his friend's

eyes fluttered open that those black holes he'd seen last night were gone.

Tsukauchi picks himself up quietly from his bed, its frame creaking from his shifting weight. The seventeen year old carefully steps over Midoriya's body, making his way to where he'd plugged the younger boy's phone in earlier. It's barely six, but Reo unlocks the phone and types out a new message to Inko.

Izuku:

I couldn't sleep well last night so

I'm out on a run!

I've got my uniform with me and

I already ate so I'll see you after

practice is out. Love you!!

Reo lets out a sigh once it's delivered and there's no immediate response, praying that the woman doesn't question the lie. Tsukauchi's mouth stretches into a yawn before he slips out of the room to start some rice.

Mom:

That's fine sweetie! Just be safe!

I love you too!!!

Midoriya wakes up slowly, his gaze hazy and unfocused. He feels numb.

He can hear the quiet murmur of life seeping through Tsukauchi's cracked bedroom door. The fifteen year old gently pushes himself up into a seated position. He looks around blearily, glancing out the window to watch light slant down the alley walls ouside as the sun

finally breaks over the tops of the surrounding buildings.

Reo slips into the room from behind him, his hair damp and school pants already on. He makes a few quiet shuffling noises to alert the younger boy to his presence before he speaks. “I made some rice and heated up some miso soup for breakfast. You might not be hungry, but I'd suggest eating something.”

Worry stains Tsukauchi’s amber eyes as Midoriya pulls one of their hero blankets over his shoulders, merely nodding his head along in response.

Reo sighes, slipping back out the door to grab the younger boy some food, bringing back two small bowls. He hands one directly to his friend and sets the other aside for later. “Do you think you’ll go to school today?”

Izuku quietly lifts a bite of rice into his mouth before gently shaking his head no.

“You’ll be fine if you don’t go right?”

Midoriya stares silently at the wall as he bobs his head. “My teachers won’t call home,” he murmurs quietly. It’s the first words he’s spoken since last night and Reo can’t help but feel a little relieved after hearing the boy’s voice. “I’ll have to go to the dojo though. I don’t usually miss training so Chee Sensei would ask Mom where I am.”

Tsukauchi turns towards his closet, keeping the fifteen year old in his peripheral as he continues to slowly eat through the small portions Reo had handed him. “I handled everything with your mom by the way.” Midoriya takes a sluggish sip of miso as the older boy pulls a plain button up out and slips it over the t-shirt he’s already wearing. “I text her saying that you left early.”

Midoriya makes a noise of confirmation before he returns to the bowl of rice as the amber eyed boy finishes buttoning up his shirt. “My mom is at a conference for the next week, so you’re safe to stay here until you have to leave if you want.” Tsukauchi shoves his school blazer into his backpack for later before slinging the bag over his shoulder. “You’ve still got an extra pair of clothes in my closet that you left here the other week too, but you’re free to wear something of mine if you want.” Reo looks down at his friend as the younger boy lets out a quiet breath, setting aside the only half empty bowl of rice with the finished bowl of miso. He rewraps the hero blanket tightly around his shoulder like a lifeline. “Thanks.”

The seventeen year old lets out a quiet sigh, setting his backpack back down as he approaches the younger boy. He quietly kneels and places a gentle hand on Izuku's shoulder. Midoriya doesn't flinch or shrug it off, so Reo wraps him into an awkward hug.

Izuku stills in his arms for only a moment before he relaxes beneath his friend's embrace, his body convulses with a barely restrained sob, the teen's face twisting into an ugly mask of grief. His teeth are bared and his brows are pulled almost painfully inward as more unrestrainable tears spill from his already bloodshot eyes. He buries his face into his friends shoulder blade, wetting his shirt with tears and snot and saliva as his hands grab at the back of it, balling the fabric between his fists.

"I just wanted to save her!" He sobs.

Maybe Tsukauchi Reo shows up to class thirty minutes late. Maybe he wishes he hadn't had to leave in the first place.

After the seventeen year old leaves, Midoriya finds himself alone in the Tsukauchi household. Reo had switched on the television in the living room before he'd reluctantly left for school, and Izuku can hear the early afternoon cartoons droning at the edge of his consciousness. He'd curled back into the futon Tsukauchi had rolled out for him, staring at the empty space beneath Reo's somewhat organized work desks.

I died, he thinks. *He killed me.*

The thoughts wrap around his mind, coiling around the fleshy organ like a boa who'd found its prey. With the boy still trying to rebuild what little mental defenses he'd had before his death, his mind has found itself at its weakest. And, like any other virus the voice in his head makes its ugly existence known, taking advantage of his vulnerability.

He'd become used to the voice, had become used to drowning it out or ignoring it. But, he's weak right now, weaker than ever before, and for the first time he can *see it.*

His heart clenches violently in his chest and Reo's parting words of, "call me if you need to talk" evaporate beneath the radiant heat of his fear.

In the darkness of his mind, *it* appears even darker, darker than the scorch marks blasted across his belongings, darker than the void that'd formed in his eyes. Its face is the faces of many, pasted on like paper thin party masks all worn at once, shifting and sliding to suit its needs. Nothing about it is human, but it holds onto a humanoid form, flaunting it like one would costume jewelry.

Tar black blood drips from its grinning maw as it pulls apart. Its voice reverberates through his skull. "*The dangers of hero work without a quirk,*" it hisses, sly grin growing, "*Are simply too high.*" The multitude of masks shift. *"How did you fool yourself into thinking that you could save anyone when you can't even save yourself?"*

Midoriya's eyes snap closed as he curls further into himself. He presses his hands tightly against his ears. But, it does nothing to drown out its multitude of voices.

Ji-Woo unenthusiastically watches the dead-on-his-feet fifteen enter the dojo. He looks closer to a cadaver than a living person and there's a moment where she wonders if his being here is the work of some sort of necromancy quirk. He greets her tiredly as he slips off his shoes at the door, leaving them in one of the cubbies.

"Midoriya you look awful."

She expects some excuse about studying late or not being able to sleep or some extra snarky comeback that would give the woman some semblance of normalcy. But, the only response she gets from him is a breathily exhaled, "Hai", that sets her on edge.

He makes to brush past her, but the woman quickly steps in front of him. "Midoriya," she says again, "Go home."

Admittedly the weren't many times where she'd send the boy home early, and there were even fewer occasions where she'd send him home outright. Usually he'd fight the command, claiming that he was fine, that he was okay, that he just stayed up just a little too late, or had pushed himself just a little too hard.

He blinks up at her and for once Ji-woo imagines that his eyes look more void like than her own.

He murmurs a quiet, "Hai, Sensei." Before turning around and slipping his shoes back on.

He walks out without another word and that is perhaps the most disturbing thing she'd seen from him in all their years of having known each other. The other students that had already arrived offer each other wary glances. They too shocked by the boy's actions.

Ji-woo anxiously taps her foot against the floor before she finally turns away and pulls out her phone, pulling up Midoriya Inko's contact info. She bypasses her other students, slipping into her office for more privacy as she presses call.

The other woman doesn't let the phone ring long before she's hurriedly answering the call. "Chee-san?" The mother's voice sounds worried, "Is everything alright? Is Izuku okay?"

Ji-woo sighes at the anxiety in Inko's voice. "He's not injured Midoriya-san. But, he seems very out of it, completely unlike himself. I sent him home. I don't know what's wrong with him, but it'd probably be for the best to keep him out of the dojo until he's feeling better."

On the other end of the phone Inko worries nervously at her lower lip. "I-I haven't seen him today, he left early this morning. I'll be sure to talk to him. Thank you for telling me."

Ji-woo pinches at the bridge of her nose. "Please take care of him Midoriya-san."

Midoriya Inko comes home to find someone so unlike her starry eyed son that it scares her.

She doesn't know what happened to the sun that had resided in his chest. But, it looks as if it had taken be drowned in an ocean three hundred times its size. He's curled up on the couch when she arrives, staring absentmindedly at the at the t.v. that's before him.

"Sweetie?" Inko ventures quietly, gently drawing his attention.

Izuku startles at the new voice, throwing himself up. He looks wildly around the room before his eyes land on his mother and relaxes. "Mom, welcome home."

Inko sets down her purse as she slowly walks towards the boy, taking his hands in her own. "Chee-san said she sent you home early, Izuku."

He nods slowly. " Right… She did that."

“Sweetheart.” The woman looks desperately into the boy’s eyes. “What’s going on?”

The fifteen year old looks at her with blank confusion. “I was just watching TV.”

“Izuku,” her grip on his hands tighten, “The TV isn't even on.”

Reo comes home to an apartment devoid of people. He’d been expecting it, but he still feels his chest clinch just the slightest. Tsukauchi slips his shoes off at the door as he lets out a tired sigh, “I’m home.”

Part of him wishes that Midoriya would’ve been here when he came back, if only so he could make sure his friend was doing okay.

The seventeen year old falls into bed, staring at the ceiling. He was emotionally exhausted from the last twenty-four hours, barely able to pull himself through all of his class. Tsukauchi rolls over, facing his worktables. He makes to close his eyes, just to take a nap before he gets around to finishing one of his projects for school, but his gaze catches on something alarming.

Reo slowly pushes himself back up, eyes locked on the dark burgundy of a foreign object that has invaded the empty space on his work desks. The boy stands, worriedly approaching it.

He flicks on his desk lamp, studying the object. “Piper’s belt?” All of the smoke grenades and escrima sticks are still attached. “Did he forget it? Or maybe something broke?” Reo looks around the desk for a note that might explain it’s sudden appearance, but finds nothing. “Did he leave it here for later?”

But, the belt resting on the corner of the desk, and the pipe sitting on the fire escape, and the boots in the back of the closet, and the clothes wadded beneath the bed, all of it, every last piece of Midoriya’s vigilante gear stays there overnight with no sign of their owner. And they wait there the next night as well, and the next, and the next, until the seventeen year old is forced to rehome Piper’s infamous staff somewhere inside because of the threat of rain. And the clothes under his bed are rehidden inside a box of spare parts, and the belt and it’s gear in a case of unfinished projects.

The sun rises and sets and every new cycle becomes another day without the vigilante Pied Piper.

Naomasa's chair creaks as he leans back in his seat, worry scoring deep lines into the man's face. "So there haven't been any reports or sightings of Piper recently?"

Sansa shakes his head, the bell at his throat jingling quietly. "Not within the last several days. He's gone completely ia."

The detective stares up nervously at the ceiling, chewing on his lower lip. "It's not the first time that he's taken a break. But, five days definitely takes the record. It's usually only ever a day or two max that he disappears for." Tsukauchi pulls his head up again, staring at the spread of reports and files beginning to clutter his desk. "I'm worried that he's gotten seriously injured this time."

The man runs a hand through his hair, pulling at it gently in an effort to alleviate the headache he can feel coming on. *We know that he has contact with some sort of medic, so checking hospitals would be a useless endeavor.* "What about the last time he was seen? Do we have a report on it?" *He could already be dead.* The man shakes his head, burying the thought. *Now's not the time to be thinking like that.*

Sansa lets out a defeated sigh. "It's nothing that would help us I'm afraid. The last report we have is on some low level drug dealer."

Naomasa pinches at the bridge of his nose, all at once exhausted and drained and ready to sleep for the next twelve hours. *Where did you go?* And then, suddenly the detective freezes, memories rising to answer his silent question,his tiredness burning away like early morning fog. "The girl."

Tamakawa looks up in confusion, golden eyes searching Tsukauchi's face for answers. "The girl?"

"Of course its the girl," Naomasa murmurs, completely ignoring the other officer in his fervor as he scrambles to pick up his phone. His quickly scrolls through his contact list before finally landing on the one he needs.

He taps his foot impatiently as the phone rings before someone finally picks up. "This is the Nighteye Agency, how may I help you?"

Naomasa recognizes the voice. "Bubble Girl, I need to talk to Sir Nighteye immediately."

"Detective Tsukauchi? I'll patch you through, please give me a

moment!”

It’s only a few more seconds before Sir’s voice bleeds through the speaker and Naomasa starts speaking before the hero even has time to finish his greeting. “I need to know if that yakuza group you’ve been watching has done anything as of late.”

On the other end of the phone Nighteye releases a tired sigh. “Not to my knowledge. We’ve managed to track them back to two more locations since your first call, and Centipeder believes that he is getting closer to discovering the location of the main base.” The hero readjusts his glasses, pushing them further up his nose. “They have a few small side bases scattered around, of the ones that we found, none have shown any extraordinarily suspicious activity as of late.”

Naomasa breathes a curse through his teeth, standing to pace the area near his desk. Tamakawa’s eyes shift to follow his motion. “Piper, the one that tipped us off to the Eight Precepts involvement with that white-haired girl, seems to have gone missing over the last few days.”

“And you’re worried?” Nighteye asks.

The detective makes a noise of agreement. “He’s just a kid himself, no older than your intern.”

The hero turns in his seat, studying the poster on the wall behind him. “That is troublesome then. This group is proving themselves to be a powerful one, if he managed to get himself labeled as a potential threat then there’s a strong possibility that they would act against him given the chance.”

Naomasa sends a hand up to tug gently at his hair, wrapping his fingers around the dark strands in a useless attempt to relieve his worry.

“I’ll ask Centipeder and Bubble Girl about him, see if they might’ve seen or heard anything while doing their reconnaissance. I’ll do what I can to find out any information. But, try not to hope too strongly for anything Detective.”

Before you head out we have more beautiful artwork from my wonderful friend trashfornaomasa !!!!!!

Chapter End Notes

I honestly hurt myself with this chapter sadljfkdsalkf Anyway! I hope you all enjoyed this week's chapter! Make sure you check out the artwork above and leave it some love <333

If you missed it last chapter Pied Piper officially has its own discord! If you'd like to join feel free to message me on twitter or tumblr (they're both linked below)!!
Thank you all for the comment last week and I will see you all next Tuesday!!!

Reignite

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I'd been five days, five days since he'd quit, since he'd died. He'd been going ever so slightly stir crazy with nothing to do, but he had no desire to go back. Not yet. Midoriya absentmindedly tabs through the clothes hanging in his closet, listing the colors in his head, tallying them up just so he has *something* to do. He pauses between a black hoodie and a white pullover, eyes catching on something on the wall behind them. Izuku pushes them aside, trying to get a better look at what it is.

The name Kogane Gizō stares back at him in a bold, red font, the header of a homemade missing persons poster.

That's right, he thinks, staring at the name with a growing sense of… *something . You're still missing. They have you too.* He shoves the clothes further to the side, taking in the man's smiling face in the picture his sister had used. He can see the man's arm slung around the shoulders of someone just out of frame, a thin sliver of their arm the only part of them not cropped out.

There are people that care about you, people that want you back.

The thought startles the fifteen year old.

He'd spent the last five days doing everything *but* going on patrol. That first day after his death had left him reeling. He'd hadn't simply *almost* died. That man had *killed* him, had taken his life, had plucked him out of existence like one would decide the fate of an ant they'd caught in their kitchen.

Fear was perhaps one of the most straight forward emotions one could experience, because you can *always* tell when you're afraid. Even if you can't decipher what is causing your fear, you always know that it is fear that you're experiencing.

And, if anyone knew what fear was, it was the fifteen year old Midoriya Izuku. He'd grown up running away from his best friend. But, within the last year something had changed, he had changed. The boy was still running. He'd never stopped running, but his sprint had changed directions. He had stopped running from his fear and had

begun to run towards it if only for the sake of those that he saved while doing so.

Midoriya had thought that he'd learned to overcome his fear, but here he was cowering in his room like he was five again and Bakugou had just turned on him for the first time.

At his sides, his fists clench.

There are still people to save.

Kogane Gizō was still out there, *Eri* was still out there, still waiting to be saved, to be rescued.

What the hell have I been doing? Hiding? Cowering? Because I lost? Because I died? The word scares him, *death* scares him. But, he's *not* dead, not anymore. He's alive, breathing, still able to fight.

Fear was a strong emotion. It had the ability to incapacitate, to *kill.* But, since when has he ever been one to give up in the face of fear? He was a vigilante. He was Musutafu's vigilante. He's faced hundreds of villains head on night after night. Piper had taken on countless thieves and rapists and murders and had lived to tell the tale. He would not let one man erase his accomplishments, erase the lives of the people he'd saved. Midoriya refused to let one one man destroy all that he had worked so hard to build.

"It's been months since I first met her," Midoriya murmurs, eyes roaming the back of his closet. "And, if I'm just now being approached about her that must mean I was getting close, right?" The wall of information stares back at him without answer. "The info from that one post… It'll lead me straight to them. I just need to be more careful."

But, he can't risk simply wandering around the area again. Doing so could mean a permanent grave this time. He glances back at his computer before striding towards it, typing in his password and immediately pulling open the link to the post. Izuku scans through it again, looking for the user that had first mentioned the house.

Midoriya pauses at the name, an amused huff of air escaping him. He taps on their account, quickly starting a direct message to send to them.

SmallMight:

Hey so this might seem pretty random but

That blue house you mentioned in that one post for Pied

Piper, what block is it in? I think I know what house it

is but I want to be sure so I can steer clear

Mirokus-Right-Thigh-Muscle:

No worries

Do you live in the area too?

SmallMight:

Yeah, there's this super sketch house that I pass

everyday and I'm worried it might be the one you

mentioned askdfjlskdfj if it is I want to stay as far

away as I can

Mirokus-Right-Thigh-Muscle:

Bro I feel you on that one

But I think it's block eight?? I could be wrong

It's right next to that corner lot with the 2 story white

house, you know the one with the roof all caved in?

SmallMight:

KSJADHFJAKSDF THAT'S TOTALLY THE HOUSE

My friends and I pass by it a lot and they've been trying

to dare me to go knock on the door since for awhile

jdshgfasdlkjfalksdjfalk

Mirokus-Right-Thigh-Muscle:

BRO LITERALLY DO NOT

SmallMight:

Asdjkhfadsklfj literally NEVER

Thanks for the heads up though! Definitely going to

take a different way home from now on

Mirokus-Right-Thigh-Muscle:

Np man! Stay safe!

Midoriya pushes himself away from the computer, checking the time. It's only nine o'clock, but he'd heard Inko turn in half an hour before, and when he presses his ear to her door he can hear soft snores coming from her room.

Izuku quietly rushes back to his room, throwing on actual clothes and slips the only part of his vigilante costume that he'd actually kept, his contact, into his hoodie pocket. The boy grabs his shoes at the door, and slips out onto their apartment's small balcony, tugging them on before climbing down like he'd done countless times already.

Midoriya knocks quietly on Reo's window, hands beginning to shake when he thinks about making his way back into that neighborhood. Tsukauchi opens the window, a surprised look on his face as Izuku kicks off his shoes and slips into the room.

Reo returns to his seat, falling into his desk chair as his eyes drift shut. "I haven't seen you in almost a week. How've you been?" The two had obviously kept in contact via text, but Midoriya had been adamant that they avoid the topic of his vigilante persona, and after seeing how terribly distraught the boy had been the teen had no choice but to oblige the wish.

Midoriya's brows furrow in the slightest as he takes a seat across from him. "Not great to be honest. I'm better now though." Tsukauchi peeks his eyes open, freezing when instead of an undiluted green he finds pied eyes boring into him. Reo straightens himself at the sight, full attention taken by the vigilante that sit across from him.

"You're back then?" But, it's a stupid question for the older boy to ask, because he can see that a fire has returned the other's heterochromatic

depths. Tsukauchi's smile rises with the sight, and falls with the fifteen year old's next words.

"I'm going back."

Reo doesn't exactly know how to react to the news, a startled "what" slips from his lips.

"There are people still out there that need to be saved, people who are being held by the Precepts. If there's even the slightest possibility that they're in that house then I have to go back."

"Absolutely not."

This time it's Midoriya's turn to be startled by the other's words.

"That first night after you met that girl, you told me that you called my uncle and that you'd be sharing any information you got with them. You told me that it was for her sake," Reo says quietly, "But, the moment you get actual information," he whispers, "you charged in head first." Midoriya can hear the rage building in his friend's voice until it finally snaps, "Did it never occurr to you to call the *police* ?! Did it never occur to you to *think* ?!"

"I was thinking!" The fifteen year old fires back.

"You *died* Midoriya!" That quickly shuts the younger boy up. "You *died* because he *killed* you! You went in to try and find her without a plan and without preparation and without telling anyone, without telling *me*. What would've happened if that man hadn't decided to bring you back? Huh? You would've disappeared without a trace! Maybe I would've never found out about what happened to you or maybe Piper would've ended up dead on the news. And, your mom would come to me asking where you'd gone and I'd be forced to tell her that you'd probably died fighting some dangerous criminal because you're a *vigilante*. And all of that would be on me because I *let you.*" Tsukauchi takes in a shuddering breath. "Midoriya, he killed you." Reo pushes himself up, taking the fifteen year old by the shoulders. "You were dead. It's only because of a whim of his that you're even alive right now." There's desperation in the teen's eyes, something there begging the other to understand. "You didn't see the look on your face when you came crawling through my window that night. You were terrified. You were *broken.*"

The newfound fire in Izuku's eyes flare to life, rearing at the words. "That girl is out there! *She's* terrified! *She's* broken. She went back

with the people who've been hurting her just to protect me!" Midoriya's voice cracks, his eyes raging like twin wildfires, one a fiery vermilion and the other a scorching emerald.

Tsukushi's hold tightens. "You said that all he did was touch you Midoriya. That's all it took for him to take your life." Pain wells up in the seventeen year old's gaze, his features soften, but twist with hurt. "I can't let you die again." But, the boy knows his friend, knows that he's just as scared to die as Reo is to lose him, knows that Midoriya would put aside that fear if it meant saving someone. But, Tsukauchi searches his pied eyes for something that would tell him otherwise. He finds nothing.

The two bask in silence for a moment, the only sound between them their heaving breaths.

"Even so," Midoriya whispers, head bowing and fingers clenched around the fabric of his pants, "If she's there, I can't leave her alone."

Tsukauchi deflates, drained of his anger. "Then don't."

The vigilante looks up, startled.

"Take it to the police. Take it to my uncle. He'll send people in to get her. You don't know how many villains are cooped up in that house. You wouldn't stand a chance alone."

As much as the words hurt, the more Midoriya thinks about it the more he realizes that his friend is right, painfully so. He wouldn't be able to do this alone. He'd only come into contact with two of the group's members, and thus far he's lost miserably to both of them. One hadn't even been a fight.

His thoughts threaten to drag him further down, but he resists them, clinging onto the sight of his friend's eyes that glow like amber. "Your uncle," Midoriya starts, the two words coming out like a choked gasp as he surfaces from the inky well of his mind. "Where does he live?"

Reo looks stupified by the question. "What?"

"Everything is a little hazy, but that man," Izuku continues, "I remember that he mentioned something about having read a police report on me." Reo's hands gently slide off the boy's shoulders as he takes a step back, seating himself back in his chair. "But, stuff like that should obviously be sealed to the public which implies that they have access to police records. Whether it was simply a one time thing or not

I can't risk leaving any physical trails for something like this."

Reo listens quietly, understanding settling in. "So, you want to talk to my uncle directly?"

Midoriya nods his head. "Exactly. So, where does your uncle live?"

Reo lets out a bone deep sigh. "Just so you know, I don't agree with this."

Midoriya lets out a soft laugh, gently lifting the mood. "Oh come on, don't you think it'll be funny? I kind of wish someone would record it. I can already see his reaction."

"I think it's an unnecessarily stupid and dangerous way to go about things," the older boy huffs, slowly relaxing. "What if he recognizes you or something? Or what if you get caught? His quirk might be a glorified lie detector, but he's still a trained police officer you know."

Izuku nods, seriousness slipping back in. "You're the one who told me to take it to the police, but I'll be careful. He might be a trained officer, but I'm also trained a vigilante, remember?"

"When I said take it to the police, you and I both know I didn't mean for you to show up outside of my uncle's apartment."

A mischievous grin stretches across the fifteen year old's face. "Who said I was showing up outside of it?"

Tsukauchi immediately blanches, ready to jump again and shake some common sense into the other boy before Midoriya breaks into peels of beautiful laughter. Reo hadn't realized how desperately he'd wanted to hear that sound. His friend's face is lit up with a genuine happiness that Tsukauchi hadn't seen in so long.

"I'm joking! You should've seen your face!"

Reo's lips curl into a gentle smile. "Please don't tease me like that."

"These are the repercussions of your words, Tsukauchi. Take responsibility please," Midoriya says with a laugh.

Reo lets out a low, groaning chuckle as he drags his hands down his face. The seventeen year old was glad to see how brilliantly the light in Midoriya's eyes had reignited. Even though those stars were prone to flickering, they were there, roaring with life.

It was because of their return that the two friends had regained some semblance of normalcy, their light banter proof of that.

I'm glad you're back . Tsukauchi doesn't say it aloud, but Midoriya can see the words shimmering in the older boy's amber eyes.

The fifteen year old sends a silent message of his own. *I'm sorry for worrying you.*

Everything wasn't back to normal. Readjusting would take more time. And, at this point, if he ended up running into that man again Midoriya has no idea how he'd react, doesn't know if he'd be able to handle seeing him again so soon. But, for now he puts on a brave face, a smile rivaling that of All Might's pulling at his lips. It's a little wobbly at the edges, but seeing it puts Reo's heart at ease.

He'll be alright. It'll take some time, but… He'll be okay.

Tsukauchi puts on a smile of his own as he spins in his seat, turning back towards his desk to grab the item he'd been working on. The teen tosses it to the other, Midoriya fumbling to catch the thin, curved gadget. "Take this at least. It's supposed to be for class, so I'll need it back, but it'll work for tonight."

Midoriya sends him a questioning look.

"It's a compact voice modifier, meant to hook into your average face mask. It's got little hooks on the back that you can sink into the inside fabric to keep it in place." Reo lips curl into a small smile at the awe he spies on his friend's face. "I made it with you in mind, but it would be pretty bad if you got punched in the face with that thing on, so I've been working on some other designs. Please don't lose it, my grade depends on that."

Midoriya's eyes *glow* as he takes in the device, fingers prodding gently at the hooks he'd mentioned.

"It's pretty basic right now, it only has two options. Multi voice is the one you'll need to use."

Izuku looks up, curiosity shining in his eyes. "What's the other one then?"

A mischievous grin creeps across Reo lips, his response coming out with a laugh, "Autotune."

Naomasa steps tiredly out of his car, locking it behind him. With the sudden disappearance of Piper he in theory should have been able to go home earlier. But, with his disappearance came a minuscule uptick in criminal activity in the area. It wasn't much, but it was enough to be noticeable.

The detective's mouth stretches into a yawn as he makes his way towards his apartment building. Bleary eyes taking in a hooded figure sitting near the building's door. They're curled into themselves, knees pulled to their chest, hands wrapping around their shins, and head tucked into their knees.

Naomasa approaches slowly, making a bit of noise as to not startle the figure. The man puts on a light tone, "Did you get locked out?"

There's a moment of silence as Naomasa pulls to a stop just in front of the hunched figure.

"Detective Tsukauchi," the name comes out distorted. The sound like a multitude of voices all speaking at once, but the words are no less clear because of it. When the boy looks up Naomasa knows exactly who it is, his pied eyes glowing beneath the dim fluorescent lighting of his apartment building.

"Piper," Naomasa exhales the name like one would a breath. The detective takes a step back as the boy pushes himself up from the sidewalk.

The vigilante dusts himself off and it's only then that Naomasa recognizes the distinctive dark vermilion of the boy's spiked boots and encompassing utility belt that he hadn't seen from a distance. "I was wondering when you'd show up. I got sidetracked by a *very* inebriated college student who wanted a selfie and was worried that I'd miss you." Midoriya's eyes catch on the man's hand as it reaches towards the phone in his pocket. "Please don't."

Naomasa pauses, hand stilling. He has a lot of things that he wants to say to the boy standing before him. He wants to ask why he'd become a vigilante and wants to tell him that he could help if the teen would just give him a chance. But, he knows that both responses have a possibility of sending the boy running. So, he sticks with something simple, "How'd you figure out where I live?"

Even the quiet laugh that escapes the vigilante comes out distorted. "For some reason I was expecting a different response from you." His eyes crinkle at the corners, a hidden smile curling beneath his mask.

“But, I can’t deny that you seem like the type to get straight to the point. I won’t tell you how I found out, just know that it’s not in anyway that anyone else could.”

“I can’t say that makes me feel any better.”

The vigilante shrugs. “Nothing I can do about that I’m afraid. But, as you could probably guess I’m not simply here to annoy you.” The fifteen year old’s smile falls, pied gaze hardening. “I’m here because of the girl.”

Naomasa’s eyes widen in surprise. “You found her?”

The boy nods grimly. “I think so. At the very least it’s somewhere that they could be hiding her.” Midoriya slides a piece of torn notebook paper from one of his pockets, handing it to the detective. “I showed up in person because I believe that the Precepts have possible access to police reports, so please use discretion with the information I’m giving you.”

Naomasa looks down at the piece of paper. It’s not a complete address, but it has everything down to the block number and house description.

“I have reasons to believe that she’s being held there.”

The detective looks back up. “What kind of reasons?”

The vigilante stiffens slightly, eyes seemingly haunted by something. “Sources and…” the boy trails off, “personal experience.” His eyes glaze over for only a moment before Midoriya is shaking the memories off again. “I was going to survey the area and ran into a man, he had one of those beak masks, so I’d assume it was another higher up. Don’t—” the boy pauses, swallowing around a lump that had formed in his throat, “Don’t let him touch you. I was going to go back alone,” he says quietly, “but, someone made me realize that I wouldn’t be able to.” He looks the detective in the eyes, resolve hardening in their depths. “But know this Tsukauchi-san, if you don’t move soon then I will go in alone as originally planned. A little girl’s life is on the line here Detective. Please don’t let her down.”

partae

[Video: clearly drunk college student, words slurring, “Broskis~ Look who I found! Ayyyyy! Bro say hi!” A clearly uncomfortable Pied Piper waves at the camera, his voice in autotune, “HiiiIIi~ EveryyybodYYYYY~” The college student turns to stare at him wide eyed, Piper stares at him equally as surprised. The vigilante speaks again, autotuned laughter coming out, “WhaaAAAaaat the heEEeeell~”]

Liked by **aBEEry** and 1,284 others

partae bros last night I went out drinking and everything feels like a total fever dream. I hardly remember anything but I was going through my phone this morning and I found this video and I’m so confused askahajsjak

#PiedPiper #vigilantes #ImSoHungover

view all 83 comments

hawks.edits BRO YOU MET PIPER????

> **_partae_** Evidently LMAO

VigilanteNewscape Hello! Would it be alright if we dmed you about being able to use this video for one of our stories? You’d be credited of course!

> **_partae_** BET BRO JUST HMU

Alien_Queen THIS DUDE IS A LITERAL MEME I LOVE HIM

> **_partae_** I KNOW RIGHT??!?

Chapter End Notes

> So, before I say see you next week I just want to tell everyone that since I've started back to school I've been under a bit of stress to get a lot of different things done, updating this fic every week is one of them. I love being able to update weekly, it gives me motivation to push through until the next week, but with all of the stuff I've been having to do it does get a little stressful when I find myself with only half a chapter done on monday night. I am NOT going to be stopping updating weekly, but if I do end up missing a week at some point I will apologize in advance, it'll probably be because I'm simply overwhelmed with all the other things that are going on. As much as I love writing this fic I will

always have to prioritize it last when faced against my academics. Either way I hope you enjoyed this chapter! I'm looking forward to wrapping up this arc soon and finally getting to UA and all of it's wonderfully painful opportunities! Until next time!

Galaxy

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Before we get started! We've got some amazing fanart since the last update!!!

TrashForNoamasa

azoniccorvidae

Even though Midoriya wakes up feeling exhausted, it's somehow the best he'd felt within the last week. Inko takes notice of the change well, the woman having to hold back tears at the sight of life in her son's eyes.

He'd adamantly denied that anything happened, telling her that he was perfectly fine. But, Inko could tell when Izuku was lying. He was a terrible liar.

That black voids that has taken over her son's eyes had scared her, had terrified her to no end. She hadn't known what to do or who to call or who she'd even be able to explain such a change to. Ji-woo didn't know what happened and the teachers at Aldera claimed to know nothing about his sudden change in mood.

He'd looked like a puppet who'd had all but one string cut, the fifteen year old hanging despondently from his last remaining thread. And as the days wore on Inko had begun to feel more hopeless. She didn't want to over react, maybe it was nothing, or maybe she was simply blowing things way out of proportion. But, that look in his eyes, she knew, almost instinctively, that that look belonged nowhere near her son.

Towards the end of that first week she'd hardened her resolve to sit him down and talk and if things hadn't gone well maybe she'd have to pull some overtime and set up an appointment with a therapist.

Inko wakes up early, gnawing gently at her lower lip as she waits for him. But, when he comes in she sees fire in his eyes, sees the reignited flames flickering there and all she can do is burst into tears and cry into his shoulder. Izuku is startled by her tears, but takes them as they come. He makes a startled noise as she rushes at him. “M-Mom! What’s wrong?” He asks, wheezing through her crushing hug, “W-What happened?”

As much as she wants the cry more, she pulls away, sniveling and wiping at her tears. “Nothing sweetheart,” she laughs wetly.

Izuku watches her skeptically. “You weren’t watching that vet show again were you?” She merely laughs in response. “That show always makes you sad I don’t know why you keep watching it,” he huffs, smile tugging at his lips.

“It always has the cutest animals though!”

Naomasa paces the length of the soundproof conference room that he and several others have found themselves in. “So,” he starts, “when do we move?”

“That’s not such a simple question Detective,” Nighteye states, “Overhaul has several known bases and there’s possibly more that we don’t know about. It’s important that whichever one we hit has him in it when we take action. I’m worried that he might try to disappear if we’re not careful.”

Tsukauchi runs a hand through his hair. “What about the address that I gave you? Was that new info?”

Sir carefully tracks the man’s path, watching him work his way back and forth on the strip of open flooring. “It’s one of the bases that we’ve already had our eye on. It’s just one of the small offshoots though. We’re still working on uncovering the location of the main base.” Sir turns towards one of the other people present. “I was hoping that you would be able to assist us with that Eraserhead.”

Aizawa sighs, but gives a curt nod in response, looking as exhausted as Nighteyes figures one would with two demanding jobs.

“I also have to ask how *you* obtained the address, Tsukauchi-san,” the hero asks, glasses glinting in the room’s overhead lighting.

Naomasa pauses in his steps, hand falling away from his hair. “We got

it from a not so anonymous, anonymous tip."

Nighteye is the one to raise a brow to ask the silent question.

"It was Piper," the detective concedes, "Do you remember the vigilante that I first mentioned? The one who originally encountered the white-haired girl with the rewind quirk?"

Aizawa raises a surprised brow of his own, "Piper is involved in this?"

Naomasa sighs, collapsing into one of the empty chairs as the conference table. "Unfortunately. He showed up outside my apartment the other night and dumped a load of information on me before disappearing again."

Nighteye nods solemnly. "You did mention that a vigilante had gotten involved. Though I do wonder how *he* got the information. The base is a much smaller one. It doesn't draw much attention."

The detective leans his elbows against the table, fingers folding just in front of his face. "He said he had reason to believe that it's where they're keeping the girl."

This gains the attention of everyone in the room. Sir's eyes narrow dangerously behind his glasses. "Are you certain?"

The man nods grimly. "He usually tries his best to avoid me at all costs. But he willingly showed up outside my apartment building for this. I'd assume that if he's willing to go so far and risk getting caught then he must be confident in the information he gave me." A seriousness falls over the detective. "Nighteye," Naomasa starts, addressing the hero, "I know you said that you wanted to be careful about this and take our time. And while I would agree with you under normal circumstances, I'm worried that Piper will try to move soon, with or without us. He's not the patient type. If we don't move before him, then we'll have to do it with him because I refuse to let that kid risk his life on something this dangerous."

A low murmur spreads through those gathered as Aizawa recalls some of the moments from his first meeting with the infamous vigilante. His features had grown hazier in his mind as time dragged on, but he'd never forget those pain seeped eyes. He wonders if the boy had seen that same expression in the little girl's eyes. If so he can understand the vigilante's rush to find her.

Sir's eyes narrow. "It's a small base. But, currently we have little to no

idea of who is inside and what any of their quirks might be. This will be dangerous for more than just him. We'll be putting a lot of people at risk if we move before we're prepared."

"Tsukauchi's right though," Aizawa interjects, "As heroes we have to act whether we have all the info or not. Not knowing is normal in this line of work. I agree that it'd be best to gather all the information we can, but if we wait too long we risk them gaining another hostage if Piper moves before us, or worse," the hero says, glancing darkly at the lanky hero across from him, "a body bag with a kid in it."

Nighteye sighs, pinching at the bridge of his nose in a futile attempt to ward off an oncoming headache. "Not to mention that if he does move before us he could put the group on alert for anything that we might try to enact at a later date."

"So we're in agreement then?" Naomasa asks, eyeing the looming hero as he stands.

"We'll move within the week. I'll finalize the date and inform you all once it's determined. In the meantime we'll continue collecting as much information as we can and pray that when the time comes that it will be enough."

r/vigilantes · Posted by u/gaster219 three days ago

Where'd Pied Piper Go?

126 upvotes

So has anyone seen Piper recently??? He's usually around my area a lot but I haven't heard anything about him doing anything? I've been looking around online but I haven't seen any new pictures or sighting…. He didn't get caught did he?

.

straight_outta_the_closet 1.1k points · three days ago

I'm sure that the police would've made a report about him getting caught if he had been I'm more worried about him being dead or something bro

.

sleepingbagwitharms 104 points · two days ago

He's not dead!! I saw a recent video of him yesterday!!! It looked like he got hit with an autotune quirk LMAOOOFBDVRSF it was legit the funniest thing I've seen in a long time aldshfjoakdslfj

.

existentialcrisisinabottle 27 points · one days ago

I noticed his absence too. I saw someone else mention that Piper might be dead, but I figure it's much more likely that he was injured in some way during a fight and is simply recuperating.

.

SPAMbassador 238 points · two days ago

You noticed too??!?!? I thought it was only meee T_T I need more content from the chaos master I mean did you SEE that video of him throat punching that villain in the middle of their monologue??!? It was both hilarious AND badass

Midoriya taps gently at Reo's window under the cover of dark. He leans his staff against the wall and begins slipping his boots off before his friend even has time to let him in.

Tsukauchi slides the window open, whining the boy's name. "Please," the teen begs, "he won't stop snoring."

Izuku's eyes brighten with quiet laughter as he swings himself through the opening. "Who? Your uncle?"

Reo flops into his seat with a defeated sigh before rolling his chair towards the closet. "Yes," he hisses. "It's so hard to get any work done. It's somehow worse than my support teacher's incessant pen tapping." As if on cue Midoriya hears a quiet snore come from the living room.

The seventeen year old sends the other a look as if to say *'see'* before he starts digging through his clothes. Reo tosses the green haired boy one of his hoodies as Midoriya slips his mask off. "Put this on, I don't want him to accidentally walking in on you in your vigilante gear."

"Is your mom gone again?" Izuku asks as he catches Reo's throw, slipping one of the teen's oversized hoodies over his other clothes. He's sure that he'll feel a bit stuffy later. But, for now the vigilante

enjoys the extra warmth it allows him.

“No, she’s not. He just had a long night evidently.” Reo sends his friend a knowing smirk, the fifteen year old returning it with a cat-like grin of his own. “Our place was closer to wherever it was you left him.”

Midoriya falls back into Reo’s bed, his own tiredness beginning to catch up with him as Tsukauchi moves back towards his desk. “I wasn’t trying to drag him out again,” Izuku sighs, “I was taking down this chick with a mutant quirk and I guess someone called it in before I could finish up.”

“He’s been really busy recently,” Tsukauchi informs the vigilante, “Ever since you gave him the info you had on that house he’s been running all over the place. Of course he hasn’t said as much, but it’s easy enough to pick up on it when he comes over looking like he did tonight.”

Izuku frowns. “For as much as he’s running himself ragged, it’s been several days since I met with him and they still haven’t moved.”

Reo gives the boy a look of offense on his uncle’s behalf. “They can’t move without info Midoriya.”

Izuku lets out a frustrated breath as he sits up. “But, I already gave them info.”

“No,” Reo tells him flatly, “You gave them an address and told them that the Precepts were there. That’s hardly enough to move on. They’ll have to stake out the area first, try to figure out if the info is accurate and if it is who they might be facing inside.”

Midoriya stands, running a hand through his curls, staring past his friend’s shoulder towards the window. “It’s just so frustrating.”

Tsukauchi releases a breath. He’s glad to see that some of the life had returned to the fifteen year old’s eyes. But, this rescue mission would be a dangerous one for everyone involved. If they didn’t move before the vigilante then Reo would personally tell his uncle who Piper was. The teen worries at his lip, he’d sooner see his friend in jail than dead *again* .

Directly behind Midoriya the aforementioned uncle walks in with little more than a quiet knock. His entrance startles the duo, Izuku freezing in place as the younger Tsukauchi quickly stands. The detective comes

in with a yawn strong enough to make water curl at the corners of his eyes. “I get that it’s the weekend,” he says tiredly, “But, it’s 1am. Please sleep.” The man pauses, at the sight of the green haired boy. “Ah, Midoriya. I didn’t realize you were staying the night.” He tries to straighten himself, probably to look more presentable, but he’s obviously exhausted, the beginnings of dark circles hanging beneath his black eyes.

Reo lets out a strained laugh as he steps forward, pulling even with his the vigilante’s side. “Yeah, he got here after you fell asleep.”

Midoriya’s gaze snaps towards the seventeen year old’s as they glance at each other from the corners of their vision. Reo’s eyes widen, fearfully honing in on the red contract still in Midoriya’s eye.

The other boy seems to suddenly remember its existence as well, the vigilante’s hand rising to cover the offending eye.

Don’t turn around, Reo thinks, desperately trying to silently communicate the message, *he’ll know. He’ll figure it out. You’ll be caught, we’ll be caught.*

But, Midoriya does turn around, hand still covering the right side of his face. “We didn’t wake you up, did we Tsukauchi-san?” There's an easy smile on the boy’s face and Reo stares at him in mounting horror.

Naomasa looks concerned when he takes notice of the hand covering the fifteen year old’s face. “Is something wrong with your eye Midoriya?”

The boy casually waves him off with his free hand. “It’s fine, I just have something in my eye. It’s a little red.”

Naomasa relaxes at the explanation, tiredness winning out over his concern. “Alright, well if there’s anything you need don’t hesitate to ask. Though I’m sure Reo’s got you covered.”

Midoriya nods, a gentle smile falling into place that softens his features. Reo knows that it’s a ploy to fool his uncle. But, even if for a moment, everything feels like its back to normal. It feels like Midoriya had never run into that girl, feels like he’d never died. It’s so convincing, so wonderfully convincing. Looking at him now is like looking at the face of a boy who’d never known suffering.

And then, his uncle is leaving, telling them not to stay up too late and Midoriya’s faux smile is melting away and Reo feels as if he’d been

forcibly wrenched back into reality.

The vigilante quickly tugs Tsukauchi's hoodie off, tossing it back to the teen. "Here, I was planning on staying longer, but if he's here then I should probably head out. It's too risky to be around him."

Reo nods reluctantly, knowing it to be the truth. The right question could leave Midoriya's entire world unraveling.

"If they question it just tell them that I left early. It's technically morning, so your if you're uncle's quirk works the way I think it does then you should be fine."

Reo releases a deep sigh as he falls back into his desk chair, the hinges protesting beneath his weight. "Are you headed home then?"

"It's like you said," the fifteen year old starts, "They don't have enough information right now. They're playing a waiting game."

Tsukauchi's brows rise as he realizes what the younger boy is referring to. "Midoriya that's—"

"I'm not going to do anything rash this time, if I see anyone I'll stay hidden, keep my distance. If the police have started a waiting game then I might as well join them. Eri needs all the help she can get."

Worry settles between Reo's brows. "He won't give you a second chance," Tsukauchi whispers, fear working its way up his throat.

The vigilante pauses at that. "I'll stay out of sight," Izuku reassures him quietly. "If all goes according to plan then no one besides you will even know that I was there."

"But what if everything doesn't go according to plan?"

No one wants to be responsible for answering that question.

"I know how to run."

But, you don't know how to quit . Reo thinks worriedly, *you don't know the definition of self preservation and that's what's got me scared.*

There's a part of Midoriya that doesn't want to go anywhere near the 7th district, it's the part that associates the area with his death. He reminds himself that the 7th district is where *she* is, and so forces himself to march across that invisible barrier and make his way

towards the 8th block.

“Are you prepared to die again?”

The vigilante grimaces at the emergence of the voice. It’s ‘face’ shifts and he turn away when it begins to resemble the man he’d rather forget.

“Children who can’t listen to warnings don’t deserve a second revival.”

Izuku’s grip on his staff tightens. “I’ve never let the fear of death scare me off before.”

“But, that was before you died, that was before someone managed to kill you. Now you’re heading right towards the man that has slain you so easily.” Its maw creaks open into a caustic grin. “ *The dangers of hero work,”* it hisses, grin widening, *“are simply too high.”*

The vigilante curses, hardening his resolve. He’s not here to fight, not yet. He’d promised Reo that he’d be careful this time, had promised that he wouldn’t dive straight in.

He peeks around every corner he comes across, checking both ways and then checking again. He keeps to the shadows and keeps his footsteps light, he keeps his eyes peeled and constantly searching the dark for dangerous figures. But, he finds none, no figures, no danger, only the two story white house with its caved in roof and its pale blue, westernized neighbor.

His heart nearly stops when he peeks around a corner and sees it, the place of which he had been searching for for so long, the place which he had died trying to reach. He wants to burst into the small house, wants to run in fists swinging and lungs screaming, voice calling out the girl’s name like some sort of banshee.

But, he knows that he can’t. He can’t rush this. He’s sure that this is his last chance to get into the house.

“You will find that your usefulness has run out. I did try to warn you.”

Midoriya physically flinches at the words, eyes darting around the surrounding area.

“There’s no one else to blame but yourself. You really should have listened.”

There's no one anywhere near him, but still the voice persists, instilling the fifteen year old with a severe case of paranoia. He does his best to shake it off, but it remains, clinging to him like the remnants of a nightmare. He curses, attempting to bury the voice as he looks for a place to hide, somewhere he can stay out of sight but still have a view of the small house's front door.

Usually there wouldn't be any good places in a residential neighborhood like this, but there was an astounding number of vacant and run down housing in the area. *A perfect place for shady dealing, not a lot of witnesses if anything happens.*

The vigilante glances around the area, taking into account the location off all the obviously vacant homes, spying one that will work for what he needs. The house he approaches is two stories high, the outside is fully intact, but it's obviously falling apart in places, several of the windows on the bottom floor having been boarded up long ago. It's one of the only houses nearby that isn't completely fenced in by stone walls, the front of the house left exposed, giving the fifteen year old a perfect view of the Precepts' base.

He slips into the house quietly, setting up shop behind one of the first floor windows that had yet to be boarded over. Midoriya crouches as he peeks out the window, balancing on the balls of his feet. It's not a straight shot, but he can clearly see through the base's front gate from here. The property is surrounded by one of those thick stone walls like most of the other houses in the neighborhood, but it makes it hard to get a good look at the house itself.

It's already almost midnight, but he can still see light seeping through what windows are visible over the wall.

Midoriya sucks in a quiet breath. *That's where she is.*

Then, in the dark, he hears something. The noise sets him on edge, goose flesh rising along his arms and legs. He freezes, holding his breath to listen for it, to make sure his paranoia isn't at play. But, he hears it again.

It's a quiet, only half heard muttering of words from the floor above. The boy's heart pounds in his chest and it's hard to hear anything over the noise, but he strains his ears in an attempt to make out what's being said.

He curses silently when he still can't make out the words. He steps lightly, making his way back into the main part of the house, heading

towards where he'd seen the stairs. The voices fade at this distance.

If I can just get upstairs.

In his head a memory of his own voice echoes, *"I'm not going to do anything rash this time, if I see anyone I'll stay hidden, keep my distance."*

"I know how to run."

I don't know who's up there. His gloved hands tighten around his staff, a scowl forming.

"You died Midoriya!"

"He killed you! You went in to try and find her without a plan and without preparation and without telling anyone, without telling me. What would've happened if that man hadn't decided to bring you back?"

The boy had died once just trying to explore the area. And, now he was shacked up in a random house across the street from an address he'd looked for for so long and he doesn't know who's waiting for him just upstairs. Yet, he'd been ready to dive straight in again, without thinking, without planning, without telling anyone. He'd been ready to do exactly what he'd just finished telling Tsukauchi he *wouldn't* do.

"You didn't see the look on your face when you came crawling through my window that night."

I need to get out of here.

But, the floorboards above him creak out a warning as two sets of footsteps begin quietly descending the stairs.

"I thought you said the stone wall would mess with your quirk? Wasn't that why we were upstairs?" The first to speak is a feminine voice. The words are said lowly, but audible enough for Midoriya to hear as he quietly slips into a bathroom on the backside of the house.

"It does," this voice is slightly louder, more masculine, "But, I couldn't get everything lined up properly from up there. All I was getting was sounds of this one specific rat in the attic that is very aggressively gnawing through something up there. I'm hoping there's a room with a direct sight line to the frontgate, otherwise I might as well be quirkless in this situation."

"You realize I'm basically quirkless in this situation, right?" The duo

stops at the end of the stairs, looking around the house. From his spot Midoriya can barely make out their figures through the dark.

“Yeah, but you’ve got a reason to be here. If I can’t hear anything they’re saying from over there then we both lose our reasons for being here.”

“Even if your quirk doesn’t work here we can still watch for people coming in and out of the house.”

There’s a sigh. “I guess. They’ll replace us with another group next time though, someone with something useful.”

The woman gently elbows her partner. “Being able to eavesdrop on people from afar is very useful. If that wall wasn’t there you wouldn’t have a single problem.”

“But the wall is there,” the man responds dryly.

“If all goes according to plan then no one besides you will even know that I was there.”

The two begin moving again, headed in Midoriya’s direction.

“But what if everything doesn’t go according to plan?”

The vigilante takes another quiet step back, trying to further disappear within the small bathroom.

“I know how to run.”

There is nowhere for him to run.

Chapter End Notes

Hi everyone, sorry about the extended break, I was hoping it'd only be a week long, but it turned out a bit longer than that. I don't know when I'll be able to get back into regular updates with school as hectic as it is (turns out you have to write a lot if you're trying to major in English □) But, I'll update when I can (maybe I'll try for every other week) But, anyway I hope you all enjoyed this chapter, I'd say look forward to the next one, but I haven't actually finished writing yet lol
Until next time!

Pluto

Chapter Notes

> Yes, I realize it's not Tuesday, but I finished chapter 20 and I didn't want to make everyone wait until next week~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Midoriya waits quietly in the shadows as the duo slips into the room he'd just come out of. The woman hangs back in the doorway as her partner moves towards the window.

"It's not a great view," he tells her, "But, I can see a bit of the first floor through the gate. It's not perfect, but it's something at the very least."

"I told you you're not useless."

The man glances back over his shoulder at the woman. "If I can't get any info then I'm afraid that the detective would disagree with you," he lets out a sigh before turning back towards the window. "Alright, I'm diving in, keep an eye out for anything nearby."

The detective? Are they police? And diving in? Is that part of his quirk? Izuku peeks out of the shadowed doorway as much as he dares. From here it looks like the man has his eyes closed, hands cupped around the ear facing the yakuza's base, though his 'ears' aren't so much ears as they are holes in the side of his head. He stays silent for only a few moments before he begins speaking in a low voice that, by the time it reaches Izuku's ear, has degraded into a hushed, wordless, hum, similar to what he'd heard coming from upstairs.

The woman stands just behind her partner, watching him for a moment before turning to look around at the room they were in, the room *Midoriya* had just been in. The woman, unlike her partner, is vigilant of their immediate surroundings, obviously keeping an eye out for any unsavory characters. Characters like the infamous Pied Piper hiding in the bathroom just across from them.

I need to get out of here.

The man sighs, drawing his partner's attention. "I think they're watching tv." He doesn't show any signs of pulling away from his position and Midoriya takes that as his sign to move while he still has

the woman's attention.

But, the moment he makes to step out of the bathroom the floors creak beneath his weight.

The woman immediately whips around, pulling out a gun from a holster at her waist. She locks onto the vigilante's frozen form, gun trained on him.

That's definitely police issued.

"Identify yourself!"

Midoriya pauses, thrown off by the question. "You… want me to identify myself?"

The woman's eyes narrow.

"Sorry, I'm just a little surprised. Police usually know who I am. Ah, I guess it's kinda dark in here though so maybe—."

The woman calls for her partner.

Midoriya's eyes focus themselves back on the gun the woman's holding. He slowly raises his gloved hands, his staff still clenched in one of them. The vigilante's gaze moves past the police officers, spying the house that they were all trying to get info on.

Eri's safety is more important than me getting caught.

"Don't shoot," the boy says quietly, "It could draw attention from across the street."

The woman glances hurriedly back at her partner, the man still has his eyes shut, hands cupped around his ear.

Can he not hear us? If he can't then now is my best chance. Getting into a fight right across from the base could end badly for more than just the three of us.

His eyes flicker towards the exit.

He runs.

The woman whips back around at his sprint. She lets out a hiss, "I might get in trouble for this but…" Behind him the woman's hair rises, quirk activating before the whip like strands dart out at the

vigilante. “I can’t let you get away!”

They catch one of his ankles, pulling his leg out from under him and sending him to the floor. He barely manages to catch himself with his hands, his chin still slamming into the floorboards with the rest of his body. Though the impact isn’t as bad as it could’ve been, it still leaves a jolt of pain coursing through him.

Midoriya lets out his own hiss as he looks back at his ankle, identifying the cause of his fall.

Her quirk.

She begins slowly reeling him back in, a stranded expression on her face as she drags him by his ankle.

The vigilante rolls over, swinging his staff with one hand and reaching for one of his escrima stick with the other. He manages to clip her in the side with the pipe, it’s enough to make her wince, but not enough to make her let go.

He swings again, but this time she catches it, the scowl on her face informing him that she won’t be letting go.

Beneath his mask a wavering smirk forms.

“…when I first looked at your vigilante gloves it seemed like the palms were coated in a type of synthetic rubber…”

He slams his electrified escrima into his staff, shaky grin pulling at his lips. His thumb is already jammed into the button to activate the weapon, the current traveling through his staff. The woman seizes up almost immediately, hand clenching down around the end of the pipe. Her legs give out and her hair loosens around his ankle as he scrambles up.

She not unconscious, just a little dazed, but the vibrations of her fall alerts her partner. Midoriya quickly slips the escrima stick back into his belt, before heading out the way he’d come, not daring to stick around and see the man’s reaction.

“So you ran into the police?”

Midoriya studies his chin in the mirror, grimacing when he prods at the bruise blooming there. “Please don’t,” the vigilante whines

through the phone, glancing down at where he'd propped the device up for their video call.

"Don't what?" Reo's voice crackles through the speaker. "Don't say that I was right?"

Midoriya sends him a pleading look.

"I was right."

The vigilante groans, picking up the phone and quietly making his way out of the bathroom. On the other end of the phone his friend goes silent until Izuku reaches his bedroom, quietly shutting the door behind him.

"You've gotta give them time to do their job."

"I did give them time."

"Give them more time," Reo begs, "Just the police do their job Midoriya, if only this once. Let them gather what they need and try not to get in their way."

Izuku flops back onto his bed, staring at the ceiling. It's a bitter pill for the fifteen year old to choke down, but it's one that he needs. *Three days,* he thinks, *I'll give them three days before I move with or without them.*

"I'll call Giran, see if he has any info on who's in the house."

" *See* ," Reo says, stressing the word, "That's what you should've done in the first place. Distant recon. Just do what you can, *from a distance* , and try to find some sense of normalcy again. You've been through a lot."

Midoriya releases a tired sigh.

"She's not the only one who needs saving right?"

The vigilante freezes, startled by the revelation.

"You forgot about that, didn't you."

Izuku's lips quirk upwards, a huffed breath of laughter escaping him. "You know I can be forgetful."

"I can't even remember what movie I watched this afternoon and you

want to talk to be about being forgetful?" A laugh of mock outrage escapes the seventeen year old. "Now get some rest. I'm barely able to function in the morning and I sleep *more* than you."

"We sleep the about the same amount!" The younger boy exclaims, laughter seeping into his voice.

"Yeah, yeah whatever you say. Just try telling that to your dark circles."

Reonhatoo reblogged **TheOtherInsominac**

Some of my favorite Pied Piper moments from the last few months!

[Gif 1: *Pied Piper, smoothly delivering a kick to a villain's chin, immediately knocking them unconscious. The vigilante, feigning a deeper voice, says, "Fatality!"*]

[Gif 2: *Piper, standing atop a building in the background, dabbing as a clueless hero signs autographs beneath him. Hushed laughter can be heard from the one filming as they zoom in on the vigilante.*]

[Gif 3: *Pied Piper, sounding genuinely sincere as he answers the phone of a zip tied criminal. "Sorry, I'm afraid your friend is a little tied up right now. Can you try again later?"*]

[Gif 4: *Pied Piper, preparing to fight a bank robber. The vigilante says, "I mean like, fuck capitalism, but also fuck you."*]

[Gif 5: *A teenager filming, "Say something cool!" The vigilante, busy tying up a semi-conscious criminal, turns to stare directly at the kid filming him, he shrugs. "Uh…. Plus ultra I guess?"*]

pansflute :

He’s baaaaaaaaack~

#vigilantes #vigilante #pied piper #i missed him so much #i dont know who is filming this stuff but I love you for it

5,872 notes

Midoriya paces the length of his room, fingers tugging roughly at his shamrock curls. It'd been too long. He’d waited to take action, had done what Reo had asked.

But, he couldn’t wait anymore. It’s been a week since the vigilante had dropped his info off, three days since he’d said three days, and the house still stood silently. “I can't wait anymore,” he murmurs quietly, pausing in his pacing to stare at the back wall of his closet now completely covered in information relating to Eri and Gizō Kogane. He’d tried to take his time, had tried to wait. He’d called Giran, he’d *tried* to do the “distant recon” that Reo had suggested, but he’d gotten no new information and the authorities didn’t seem any closer to saving her than they had been before he’d given them what information he’d had.

“I can’t make her wait anymore. I have to move.”

The thought scared him, moving in alone scared him.

But, what else was he supposed to do? Every second longer that girl had to stay in that hell his guilt grew tenfold.

If only I’d saved her that first time. If only I’d been stronger, if only I’d tried harder.

He’d tried to have faith in the police, he’d tried to let them do their job like Reo had told him to. But, in spite of that he’d been preparing.

The vigilante sighes, pulling out his phone from Giran and dialing the man’s new number. Midoriya waits only a moment before the villain answers. “Calling me at all hours of the day now are you?”

“Giran.”

“You sound so serious, what’s the matter?”

“I have a different kind of request for you,” Izuku murmurs, gnawing at his lower lip.

“Oh?”

“I’m about to do something pretty reckless.” The vigilante settles himself on the edge of his bed, springs creaking beneath his weight.

On the other end of the phone the broker says nothing, merely raising his brow as he leans back against a wall, overseeing the movement of a few items in the warehouse.

“Something that could get me killed.” Midoriya’s hands shake, grip on his phone tightening as his free hand clenches around the fabric of his pants. “If you don’t hear from me within the next few days there’s something that I’d like you to do for me.”

“And you’re trusting me to do this?”

“You’re the only one I can tell who won’t also try to stop me.”

Midoriya takes longer than usual to get into his vigilante gear, mind roaring with indecision. He would go of course, but how would he do what he needed once he got there? Rushing in was an option, but it wasn’t a very good one. The voice in his head that sounded like Reo’s scolding him for even considering it.

Sneaking in and out would be the best option, any sort of confrontation could leave him dead faster than he could think to blink if he ran into the wrong person.

Fear like the sun burns hot in his chest, nearly blinding him to anything but the fear. But, beyond the heat-like haze he can see the wavering form of Eri in the distance.

“ *Is that even your name?* ” he calls out to her.

She doesn’t respond, her image merely continuing to waver in the heat like a mirage.

He swallows his fear, swallows it for the sake of the little girl trapped in that house. His memories find her wrapped in bandages and crimson eyes blown wide with fear, with terror. And it’s her terror, her fear, that lets him dispel his own.

He can't let her wait any longer.

Silently, he apologizes to his friend. *I waited as long as I could.*

There's no movement on the street the house is on, but it's not surprising to the vigilante considering how late it is. Your average person would have long since been asleep by now. There's no sign of anyone, but Midoriya still proceeds forward carefully. Approaching the house itself is definitely the scariest thing he'd willingly done since becoming a vigilante, but it's the first step to saving Eri.

He doesn't dare go through the front gate, instead making to scale the wall bordering the house. Once over he considers his options as he presses himself into the shadows.

Attempting to go in through the front door is completely out of the question, so Piper slips around the side of the house looking for another way in. Most of the windows he sees are either boarded over from the inside or couldn't be considered an entrance point without shattering the glass. There is a door on the back of the house, but the boy saves it for after he's checked all the windows.

At last he settles his hand on the knob, turning it.

I can't believe I'm doing this.

The knob turns easily beneath his hand.

It's unlocked?

The back door is surprisingly open, though any luck he may have had, and any hope that many have flared with this discovery, quickly fizzles out the moment he cracks the door open. Two sets of eyes stare back at him from what he assumes is the kitchen. The three blink at each other before Midoriya gently closes the door again, face draining of color as his hands tremble and his heart pounds in his chest.

Shit.

There's a few more seconds of calm before there's commotion on the other side of the door and the vigilante quickly shifts to the side, slipping a escrima stick from his belt for later use. The door swings inward a fraction and a head peaks out at him from the crack similarly to how the fifteen year old had done just moments before.

Midoriya smiles at the man sheepishly from behind his mask before jamming the escrima stick, crackling with electricity, through the small opening and into the man's abdomen.

I need to take them down as quickly and as quietly as possible.

The man seizes up, stumbling back as Midoriya pulls the escrima away before collapsing to the creaking wooden floor. The vigilante kicks the door open, his resolve hardening as he exposes the second man that charges towards the boy.

Izuku takes a step through the doorway, freeing up his attack range. His escrima stick is grasped in one hand, and the other holds his signature staff. Piper swings his left hand up, bringing with it the pipe. He sends it towards the man's head with a one-handed baseball bat like swing.

The use of the bo staff was an art, but this was survival. There were innocent lives depending on him.

The pipe catches the man in the side of the face, hitting just beneath his ear and slamming right into the bottom of his jaw. He lets out a grunt of pain before he too collapses to the ground.

Piper makes quick work of subduing the two, hogtying them with zip ties from one of the many pockets on his pants and stuffing rags from the kitchen sink into their mouths. He drags the two outside as quietly as he can. The first man he'd originally tased is back to being fully awake now, glaring at him menacingly. Midoriya's eyes narrow as he takes a step towards the restrained villain. Piper crouches down, balancing himself on the balls of his feet as he reaches for the rag jammed between the guy's jaws, prying it out.

"Where's the girl?" The vigilante asks coldly.

"What girl?" the other spits.

"The white-haired girl, Eri."

He pauses for a moment, thinking. "Her?" the man sneers, "The little miss ain't here dumbass," a hint of sarcasm seeps in at the title of 'little miss'. "The boss man won't let her out of his sight after that last time."

Midoriya freezes beneath the weight of those words. *She's not here?*

“If she’s not here then where is she?” Piper hisses.

“Like I’d tell you dumbass.”

The vigilante’s pied eyes darken.

“I’d rather be in jail for not saying anything than be dead for being a snitch. That man kills like he’s deciding what to eat.”

Piper stiffens, his grip on his staff tightening. The night of his death had been blurred with terror, parts of it repressed just to keep him sane. But, those words that man had spoken refused to be forgotten.

“ *Don’t lie to me, boy. I know who you are.* ”

“ *That man kills like he’s deciding what to eat.* ”

Their fingertips brush against each other’s and there’s a moment where Midoriya simply stops existing.

The boy’s chest clenches, heart shuttering, sun wavering, the black holes in his eyes threatening to flare back into existence. The voice in his head coils, winding up like a snake preparing to strike, but he slams down on it. Shuts it out, bars it from even attempting speech with its eldritch maw. Midoriya shuts it tight, tying its mouth shut with the same zip ties he used to subdue criminals. They don’t prevent its sinister grin, but they keep its words from being spoken.

He can’t afford to waver now. *If Eri isn’t here, and she’s with their boss like he says then that means the boss isn’t here either. And their boss…*

“ *…If you come looking for my things again, you’ll find that any usefulness you may have once had will have run out.* ”

“ *…my things…* ”

Was that him? The boss?

“Who’s here then?” he asks the man, “You wouldn’t stay in this house if there’s nothing here.”

“Read my lips,” the man sneers, “Like. I’d. Tell. You. *Dumbass* .”

Piper breathes a frustrated sigh, shoving the dirtied rag back into the man’s mouth. “Stay quiet then. I’ll find out one way or another.”

The vigilante leaves them just outside the door, hoping that no one

would find the two, or worse, hoping that one wouldn't be able to escape before he's able to make it out. Zip ties weren't quirk proof, he'd known that from the beginning, that's why he usually tried to knock his opponents out or stood watch over them from a distance until police arrived. He couldn't do that now. He'd already tried to get the authorities to move against this place and for over a week he'd waited while they'd done nothing. *Eri* had waited while they'd done nothing.

This wasn't a situation where he could wait for help to arrive, he'd already asked them to come once, had warned Tsukauchi that he'd move with or without them.

He couldn't wait any longer, he couldn't let *Eri* wait any longer.

Yes, he'd been scared, he still was scared, scared of what being tired of waiting entailed.

Midoriya pushes himself up, using his staff to help pull him to his full height as he heads back towards the building, peeking into the kitchen to check for any new people that may have appeared.

It would be preferable if those two were to only enemies inside, but hoping so is an unreasonable wish.

That man could always be lying about Eri not being here. It'd be a reasonable tactic, a smart one even. Midoriya steadies himself. *I'll need to check all the rooms myself to be certain, I can't just leave because a villain told me so.*

"If she's really not here though," Izuku murmurs lowly, "This would be the best place to figure out where she really is." The vigilante creeps through the kitchen, keeping himself in a position that's easy to defend.

He can hear a tv droning from another room and when he peeks out the kitchen he can see someone passed out on an outdated couch he'd sooner see at Dagobah than in any home. Piper freezes in place, watching the gentle rise and fall of the woman's chest. There's a few empty beer bottles and instant ramen cups scattered around the room and some foreign film murmurs at its unconscious audience.

The figure, who he assumes is a woman, shows no sign of movement at his appears despite being in clear view of the couch and the vigilante can only pray that it stays that way as he creeps further into the house. The fifteen year old tip toes towards the hall on the other

side of the room, breathing a sigh of relief when he makes it to the other side.

There are three doors in the hall, the first of which is open, reveals only a bathroom lit by the tv's flickering glow. He creeps further forward, heart pounding as he glances back warily to check if the woman in the living room had moved.

His freezes at the next door, three locks glinting beneath the light of the tv, bolting the door shut. The vigilante glances at the next door down. There weren't any locks on that one. *If they're keeping anyone here, it's in this room.*

The boy sends a look over his shoulder at the living room one more time before he begins undoing all the locks before turning the knob slowly, its internal springs creaking.

Please have been lying. Please be here Eri. Please.

The first sliver of the room he can see comes up empty, nothing but barren walls. Then he catches the foot of a dirty mattress lying on the floor and something in his chest twists with hope.

She's here.

He hastily pushes the door the rest of the way open, pupils dilating in an attempt to see through the darkness.

The hope in his chest is quickly crushed when he sees that the figure sprawled silently on the bed is not that of a little girl, but that of an adult man.

His hands are locked together with quirk suppressant cuffs that the vigilante recognizes all too well. The TV's light dies out for a moment, hiding the man's form before it comes back full force.

His hair is longer, face more gaunt, skin more bruised. But, the vigilante had spent hours upon hours staring at this man's face. His missing poster is still taped to the back of the vigilante's closet like some ignored memo begging for acknowledgement, but Midoriya hadn't offered him any. He'd been so caught up in tracking down the Eri that he'd almost forgotten, had almost forgotten that of Gizō Kogane.

Chapter End Notes

That's it for this chapter! I'm sorry again for all the sporadic updates recently, multitasking and time management skills aren't my best areas of expertise.
I'm thinking there will only be one more chapter before we move onto the next "arc" of this fic :)) I hope you all are just as excited for this as I am. I've got a few things prewritten for this upcoming part of the story so I may even be able to get back to regular updates if everything goes well!
Also I don't really talk about numbers much, but we hit 420 comments recently 😎 if you're on the discord server you'll already know this though laksdjflsdkfjdf We're also about to hit 20k hits and that's honestly just so mind blowing to me
Thank you all for your support, everyone has been really kind and just thank you all so much! Until the next update!

Sunspot

Chapter Notes

TW:// Blood, violence, and mentions of death

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“We’ve caught movement outside the house, someone moving alone,” the voice of a hero crackles through the speaker, “Has the operation already begun?”

“What?” Naomasa’s head whips towards the radio they have set up in the police's surveillance van. “No one should be moving yet.”

“They’ve scaled the wall and are approaching the house!” the hero hisses through the speaker.

The detective curses, “Who is it. I’ll have their license suspended if the operation goes south because of them.”

“It’s no one I recognize, they’re carrying a staff. T-They’ve entered the house and are now engaged in combat!”

“A staff?” Naomasa breathes, eyes widening. “What kind of staff, it wasn’t a pipe was it?”

The speaker crackles to life again. “It’s hard to see, but it’s possible.”

Tsukauchi pushes himself up quickly as he turns to Nighteye and his intern. “We need to move now, it’s gotta be Piper. Mr. Brave please keep an eye on him.”

“Detective,” Sir says, fingers folding in front of his face. “We can’t move yet. A majority of the team isn’t in position. If it’s Piper then he’ll have to hold out for a while longer.”

“Nighteye!” the man exclaims, “Piper isn’t any older than Lemillion!”

The speaker crackles to life again. “They’re dragging out two individuals now, both have been restrained!”

“He’s my age?” Naomasa’s eyes snap towards the hero’s intern, a grim look in his eye as he nods. “We can't just leave him in there then.” Mirio turns towards the older hero. “I’ve at least had training for

situations like this.”

Nighteye sighs. “The fact that that boy has made it this far is a testament to his skill. Everyone should be in position soon, he’ll have to hold out until then.”

“The target is entering the building again!”

“Piper disappeared for almost an entire week before showing up at my doorstep,” Naomasa cuts in. “He never disappears without a reason. There’s a strong possibility that he could still be recovering from wounds that we don’t know about.”

“This is dangerous for more than just him,” Sir states, gaze hardened. “Rushing in could put lives on the line.”

Kogane raises his head at the vigilante’s appearance. He looks only half conscious, exhaustion pulling at the lines on his face. “More gold?” He murmurs, still partially asleep judging from his muted reaction.

You.

“She’s not the only one who needs saving right?”

Midoriya curses. *I didn’t think you’d be here. Forgive me.*

The vigilante strides towards the bed. The action rouses the man as he quickly pushes himself up.

“Let’s go. Your sister’s waiting on you.” Piper tells him quietly, offering the man his outstretched hand.

Kogane's eyes widen at the mention of his sister. “Who are you? You're not with the others?”

“I’m not,” the boy assures him, “I’m a vigilante. Your family’s been worried about you.” Piper’s outstretched hand does not waver. Getting Kogane out is now one of his top priorities. He’ll still needs to search the rest of the house before he’ll be able to leave, but this man had suffered too. Making sure he got away is just as important. *They could be keeping her in the attic, that one officer the other day mentioned there being an attic. If she’s as important to them as they’re making her out to be then Kogane could be a decoy to make people think there’s no one else being held here.*

Midoriya's eyes flicker towards the door, watching for movement and listening for any sounds in the rest of the house. "There's a woman passed out on the couch, and I've got two guys tied up outback. If we're gonna get you out of here then now would be the best time."

"That's only three," Gizō murmurs.

Midoriya glances back at him. "What?"

"Usually there's one more."

His fingers tighten around his staff. "Is it a little girl? Someone else they're keeping captive?"

"What?" The man looks confused. "No. You said the woman was asleep so it'd be another guy, an adult. And, I don't think they're keepin' anyone else here."

The vigilante's heart falls. "So, there's not a little girl that stays here? Have you ever heard her mentioned? Her name is Eri, she's got white hair an–"

A voice cuts the boy off from the hallway, "It seems a rat has found its way in."

The vigilante whips around towards the door, already on the defensive at the sound of the unknown voice.

"Fraternizing with the enemy, are we Kogane-kun? Life's just full of surprises, huh?"

"S-Setsuno-san," Gizō stutters.

A beak mask stares back at the duo from the doorway, freezing the fifteen-year-old's heart. Memories of that night surface unwillingly, fed by his inner demons.

"Because of that I can't say that I particularly hate you Mr. Vigilante."

"Overhaul warned us that ya might show up looking for somethin' that doesn't belong to ya."

"But, remember this child, if you come looking for my things again, you'll find that any usefulness you may have once had will have run out."

The mask is different, and the man it's attached to is different as well. The blonde of his hair is the antithesis to the dark, feathery strands he

was witness to some two weeks ago. Midoriya's heart slowly unclenches, but that fear is still there, still thriving beneath the gaze of that beak-like mask.

"I didn't think ya'd have the guts to show up after what he said he did ta ya."

Midoriya doesn't have time to hesitate. Even with his sun flaring with the fear of death in his chest he can't afford to falter. He can't afford to lose with Kogane still sitting behind him, for both their sakes, for Eri's sake, for the sake of everyone else he plans to save after this.

The vigilante brings his staff up, aiming his attack at the underside of the villain's chin.

Setsuno steps back with a practiced ease, avoiding the blow as he draws the katana sheathed at his waist, taking up his own defensive position. "I won't be underestimatin' ya."

"That's unfortunate," the fifteen-year-old says with more confidence than he feels. "It would've been nice to see your shocked face when I kick your ass. Well," he pauses, feigning to think it over, "I guess I'll still get a chance to see that."

"Yer holdin' yourself up to quite the standard aren't ya, saying so easily that yer gonna beat me."

"Gotta be confident. I've got people counting on me you know."

"Ha! That's fer sure. I'll be countin' on ya to die for me then!"

Midoriya dodges the first swing of the katana, dancing away from the blade. Swords are dangerous weapons, ones that are meant to keep your opponents at a distance. There's a sharp screech of metal against metal as Setsuno parries the vigilante's next blow.

Months of playing at vigilantism has gotten Midoriya uncomfortably close with the usage of quirks. Weapons, on the other hand, were a rarer sight to see. He'd dealt plenty with bo staves in the dojo and it wasn't uncommon to find a criminal weilding a small knife if their quirks weren't suited for the situation. But, the vigilante can't say that he's ever faced off against someone who knew how to use a katana before.

Just treat it like a bo staff, he tells himself, trying to calm his racing heart, *a very sharp, very deadly bo staff* . He lures the man further into

the room, watching from the corner of his eye as Gizō hastily stands, hiding along the wall, staying out of the way of the two's clashing weapons. Midoriya urges the man towards the door with a jerk of his head. Midoriya slips past another swing of the villain's blade. He gives Kogane a nod of reassurance as the man pauses at the room's doorway. "The backdoor!" the vigilante calls over the clash of metal.

Kogane gives the fifteen-year-old a silent nod that he doesn't see before he disappears out the door.

Setsuno's blade flashes in the dark, another screech of metal filling the room as Piper deflects the blow.

"Ya can't play defense forever now Mr. Vigilante. And sendin' him off on his own? There's more than just me here."

The boy grits his teeth. *Please be safe.*

Suddenly a call goes up from the living room, the voice of a woman echoing down the hall. "Heroes! Heroes are outside!"

"Everyone is in place, begin the operation, Mr. Brave, Cycler, and Rock Lock through the front, the assigned police personnel will follow them in. Remaining support heroes make sure you keep the house circled and be ready to offer assistance and capture anyone who tries to flee," Nighteye's voice crackles through the team's radio comms. He turns towards Naomasa. "Take Lemillion with you and go through the back. Once we breach the front wait ninety seconds before going in. If you run into Piper you'll probably be the only one with a chance of convincing him to stand down peacefully."

Setsuno freezes at the warning cry, eyes snapping towards the hall. The vigilante takes his chance, jamming the end of his staff into the man's diaphragm. *If heroes are here then I don't have time to be fighting like this* . The villain hunches over with a wheeze of pain and Midoriya slams his elbow into the man's exposed back. He can't tell how much damage it does, but he takes it as his chance to dart out of the room to follow behind Kogane.

There's chaos in the living room. The woman from earlier is wide awake now, staring determinedly at the door, her hands glowing yellow as she presses them against it. There's banging coming from the other side of the door, blows hard enough to shake it in its frame. "Setsuno-san!" she shouts, "I can't hold them back much longer!"

Midoriya can hear the strain in her voice.

The vigilante continues his sprint for the kitchen. *I need to get out of here, I can't afford to get caught. They'll be able to check the rest of the house for Eri.*

He skids into the kitchen, eyes spotting Gizō as he tries desperately to pry the backdoor open.

"Open it!" Piper shouts, closing the distance between them.

"I can't!"

Midoriya's eyes jerk back towards the living room. "A quirk?" he mumbles.

The vigilante catches movement in the shadows of the living room and quickly shoves Kogane into the corner next to the backdoor. A warning of, "Stay down!" on his tongue as he dodges a swing from his opponents katana.

"She sure has a great quirk right? 'S really useful like this. Sad thing is that it can only be used in a small house like this. But s'long as she's still standin' no one can get in," Setsuno says, smile rising behind his beak-like mask, "and no one can get out. We're on lockdown Piper, and before time runs out I'm gonna make sure I kill ya properly this time."

Midoriya feels ice in his veins before he quickly takes the defensive.

The vigilante counters a blow from the villain's sword with a swing of his pipe. "If there's one thing I 'ave to do tonight," the man breathes, "It's make sure that yer dead body ends up in the news tomorrow. That's the least I can do to thank Chisaki-san. He gave trash like me purpose. So I'll kill all the heroes here and repay 'em."

"That man knows no kindness," Midoriya hisses, shifting his stance to one of attacking. "He kills too easily. Hurts others too easily." The vigilante sends another jab with his pipe towards the man's stomach. The villain slips around the blow just in time, dodging the worst of the damage, though the staff still scrapes past his side.

Setsuno lets out a grunt of pain as a smile twitches at his lips. "I can do that too."

The villain jabs his sword forward faster than the fifteen-year-old can

pull back from his previous attack. Unlike with the vigilante's attack, the katana lands center mass. Midoriya can feel its impact, can feel the fear of death flare up, burning star-like in his chest. He's scared of dying again.

It hurts. But, with the boy's bulletproof vest the wound will do nothing more than bruise.

Setsuno looks surprised, brows rising. "A quirk?"

The vigilante lets the man believe what he will. That fear of dying still burns hot in his throat, but subcomming to it now would mean death. The boy works deftly, grabbing for one of the escrima sticks at his waist as he quickly pulls it up, connecting it with that of the sword still pressed against his chest. Setsuno sees it coming, letting go of his weapon and avoiding the electrocution. *It would've been better if he hadn't dodged,* Midoriya thinks as the sword falls to the ground, *but he's weaponless now, so it's still a decent outcome.* Izuku quickly slips his escrima stick back into his belt as he kicks the sword away, sending it skittering across the tiled floor, far out of reach of his opponent.

The vigilante takes up a fighting stance as the villain charges at him, staff ready to strike out at any moment until it disappears from his grasp. Setsuno is still covering the distance between them when Midoriya watches the pipe disappear from his grasp and materialize instantly in his opponent's hands.

His quirk.

Midoriya scowls, but merely shifts his stance to a more defensive one. "You act like I need a weapon to kick your ass."

The vigilante dodges a swing from his stolen staff and slips past a clumsy imitation of his previous jab.

He hasn't teleported his katana back to him. Is there a reason he can't?

Midoriya slides one of the escrima sticks from his belt and watches as the villain's eyes hone in on it. Setsuno drops one hand away from the pipe and almost instantly the weapon disappears from the vigilante's gasp, fingers clenching around nothing but air.

Can he only use his quirk when the object is in someone's hands? What about eyesight? Does that have anything to do with it?

The villain tosses the weapon over his shoulder and Midoriya watches

it clatter to the far side of the room. “Didn’t you just say that you didn’t need a weapon to kick my ass?”

Midoriya ignores the taunt. “Where’s the girl?”

Setsuno instantly picks up on the topic of conversation, a caustic grin creeping across the man’s face. “You’ll never find her. Even if I told you exactly where she is there’d be nothing you could do.”

“So you know where she is.” Midoriya’s hands reaches for one of the smoke grenades attached to his belt. “That’s all I needed to know.” The vigilante pulls the ring from the canister, but keeps his fingers clenched around the handle release trigger. The villain’s eyes catch on the object in his hand and within seconds the grenade is in the other’s grasp, handle no longer held down.

“I was hoping you’d do that.”

There’s a small pop before verdant smoke begins flooding the room.

“Team A has broken through! Now engaging the enemy!”

Naomasa turns towards Lemillion, counting the seconds. There’s a nervous worry that presses against his chest, but there’s determination clear in his eyes. “Get ready, we’ll be going in soon.”

The vigilante spins, sending a spiked boot flying for the man’s face as the sounds coming from the living room get louder. The villain dodges as expected, leaning back to avoid the blow as the beak mask takes the brunt of it instead. But, the spikes catch in the leather, dragging the man with the downward swing of his leg until the mask’s clasps break and Setsuno stumbles back. A mix of grim determination and anger settle over the villain’s features as the mask falls lifelessly to the floor, a small knife sliding out of it and skittering across the kitchen tiles. The vigilante releases a war cry that sounds more desperate than intimidating as he charges forward, slamming his fist into the man’s jaw with enough force to break it. The villain stumbles, legs turning doughy beneath the blow, stars overtaking his vision.

Midoriya takes his chance, knocking the feet out from under his opponent and dropping down with him.

“Tell me where she is!” He shouts, voice breaking as he throws another punch at Setsuno’s face. “Where is she!” he screams. The fear

he's felt and the frustration and the anger and the powerlessness he's faced rises within his chest. They act as fuel for his sun, making it burn brighter, hotter, so hot that Izuku can't stand it. He feels tears welling, blurring his vision. They sizzle against his cheeks as his insides burn with the build up of every emotion he's felt over the past two months. He burns with the culmination of all his righteous fury. "Where is she!" he screams again, throwing a third punch at Setsuno's face then another, and another. Again and again. He bloodies the man's face and breaks the man's jaw. "Where is she!"

"Tsukauchi, Lemillion, you're cleared to enter."

"Copy that." Naomasa nods in Mirio's direction.

The two can hear shouting coming from inside the house now and Mirio quickly activates his quirk, phasing his head through the door to survey the situation. He pulls back. "The room is filled with green smoke, possibly a quirk. There seems to be some sort of fight going on towards the center of the room and there's another person cowering near the door. He's wearing quirk suppressant cuffs so the possibility of it being a detained villain is high."

Tsukauchi gives a stearn nod before turning the knob and throwing the door open.

Beneath his gloves the skin of the vigilante's knuckles bruise and break and bleed.

Naomasa steps into the kitchen, weapon drawn in preparation of a fight.

The smoke is a thick green, but as soon as the door opens it begins flooding out into the cold night air. The detective covers his mouth and nose with the inside of his elbow, trying to see through the verdant haze.

"Lemillion!" He calls over the sound of fighting from the other rooms, gesturing towards Kogane who still cowers in the corner. "Get that guy out of here!"

The teen nods, lifting the man up bridal style before slipping back out.

Through the smoke he can see a pipe laying on the floor and Tsukauchi feels his heart speed up. *Piper* . Then, through the

dissipating haze of green, he sees him.

“Piper!” he shouts, “Piper!” Naomasa takes a step closer, coughing as he calls the boy’s name. Midoriya’s fists slow to a halt as he straddles the villain beneath him, breathing labored. The fifteen-year-old slowly leans back to stare at the damage wrought by his trembling hands.

The teen looks towards Naomasa, blood splattered across his mask and his gloves and his face and everything is the same color as that vibrant scarlet eye. “She’s not here,” is all he says, “She’s not here. I don’t know where she is if she’s not here. He won’t tell me.”

The detective lowers his weapon. He’s never seen the vigilante look so human before, has never seen him look quite so boyish.

“He won’t tell me.” Izuku stumbles his way up, numbly grabbing his staff as he goes. “She’s not here,” he repeats, this time more to himself. “Somewhere else then.” The vigilante turns, making to leave.

“Piper!” Naomasa calls after him. But, the boy doesn’t stop. “Piper,” the detective says again, raising his weapon with the name. “I’m placing you under arrest.”

The boy pauses, turning to glance over his shoulder. “For what?” he asks despondently, “For saving people? I can’t even protect one little girl. What makes you think that I can save anyone?”

The detective falters at the words, caught off guard.

“How could I have done any of the things that you’re about to accuse me of when I can’t even do this right?” The vigilante stares at the floor, pied eyes dull. He raises a gloved hand, studying the blood glinting beneath the kitchen lights. He clinches it into a fist, a new light flaring to life in his eyes. Naomasa’s never seen such foreboding light in the eyes of someone so young. “If you’re going to arrest me for something then it should be for the crimes I’m *going* to commit,” the boy hisses. “I’m going to hunt that bastard to the ends of the earth if that’s what it takes to save her. He should’ve kept me dead,” Midoriya spits, lips pulled into a sneer behind his mask. “I won’t let him have her. I won’t be so weak next time.”

The man doesn’t know what it is that keeps him in place, watching as the boy turns, walking out the door. It’s only the low groan that the detective hears from behind him that snaps him out of it. He slides his weapon back in its holster and drops down onto one knee to inspect the injured man. Tsukauchi grimances at the sight.

The vigilante strides out of the house, eyes immediately honing in on the few support heroes who have taken over the backyard. He addresses them directly, “Detective Naomasa needs backup ASAP! One of the villains has been taken down and needs immediate restraints and medical attention!”

“Right!” One hero nods before quickly jogging past him, hands already wrapped around a pair of the quirk suppressant cuffs like the ones Reo cut off him.

“There was another man inside, someone should have brought him out already. He’s been held captive by the Precepts for the last six month, please make sure he’s taken care of. His living conditions while he was with them are unclear.”

One of the support hero’s eyes widen in shock. “I-I’ll go inform the others! Everyone assumed he was one of the villains.”

The vigilante nods. “Please take care of it.”

Another hero approaches the boy, it’s someone he recognizes, but as he is now he can only remember that she’s a support hero. “Are you injured?” She asks, eyes roaming his figure for damage, she must lock into the splattering of blood on his face because she immediately turns to a hero that he only remembers the quirk of, some type of costly healing quirk. “Salve can y—”

“I’m fine,” the vigilante cuts in, “The fight is winding down, but it’s not over. There may be people worse off than me. Save your strength.”

“Ah, h-hai.” Midoriya makes to stride past them. “Where are you going though?”

“I’ve got information to give to everyone up front,” is all the boy says before disappearing around a corner.

“Do you know who that was?”

“No idea. Maybe it was Nighteye’s intern?”

“I thought that was the kid who carried that other guy out though?”

Naomasa bursts out of the house, eyes hardened with determination. “Where’s Piper?” Tsukauchi finds no one but the startled group set to

guard the backyard and curses. The detective strides towards the nearest hero. “The vigilante with the pipe, where is he? Did you already catch him? Is he with the police already?”

“V-vigilante?” The man stutters, eyes widening as he turns to look at where the boy had disappeared. “I thought he was one of us. H-he said he had a report to give to everyone out front.”

Tsukauchi curses, hand running violently through his hair. *Why did I just let him leave? He was right in front of me.* He brings his walkie talkie up to his mouth. “I need an immediate APB out on Piper. He should still be in the area. Don’t let him get away.”

Chapter End Notes

AHAHAHAHAHA I FINALLY FINISHED THE CHAPTER IT'S BEEN SO LONG I MISSED THIS
I've been stupidly busy with school the last few weeks and I'm afraid it's only gonna get busier so I wouldn't expect any regular updates until after finals but I'll try my best uwu
I really love writing this fic and if things go well maybe I may start trying to make it into an actual publishable book
Either way I'm happy to be able to update finally! Sorry for making you all wait
Thank you all for your support! I hope you enjoy and look forward to the next chapter!

OH AND BTW Next saturday, the 16th will mark the one year anniversary of the first document that I created for Piper💔It's been a long journey, but I'm glad all of you have decided to join me on it! Special thanks to my friend beta reader Avery as well! Don't know what I'd do without them🐾

Meteor

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Midoriya paces the length of Reo's room as the older teen sits patiently in his office chair. His back is to the boy, fingers folded in front of his face as he leans his elbows against his desk. His eyes are closed, breathing deep and slow.

"You went back."

"Yes," the vigilante confirms, still pacing. He'd arrived at the teen's house shortly after escaping from the 7th district. Reo's bedside clock blinks 2:38am at them in a blocky, neon font. He's still completely decked out in his vigilante gear sans his mask and gloves which he'd ditched the moment he'd arrived. "There ended up being only four villains and the heroes showed up while I was fighting the third guy."

"Why?"

Midoriya glances at him incredulously. "Why the heroes showed up?" Izuku asks, trying to clarify the question.

"No," Reo murmurs, "Why'd you go back?"

There's a harsh resolve that glints in the vigilante's eyes at the question. "I promised myself that if the police hadn't moved after a certain amount of time then I'd go myself."

"You promised *me* that you'd let them do their job," Reo spits.

"I gave them as much time as I could," Midoriya replies. The boy pauses in his pacing to stare out the window. He bites at the nail of his thumb anxiously. "She, Eri, wasn't even there though so I'm back to square one. I'll have to ask Giran if he has anymore possible locations where they could be keeping her. That guy could've been bluffing though," Midoriya murmurs to himself. "If he was then the heroes might've found her already." He shakes his head. "No I shouldn't get my hopes up until I get confirmation."

Tsukauchi slams his hands into the table, pushing himself up violently. The action startles the fifteen-year-old as he turns to look at his friend with wide eyes. "Damn it Midoriya!" Reo shouts, eyes

blazing with fury as he rounds on the boy. Tsukauchi makes to slap the vigilante. The black-haired boy waits for the sting of skin against skin, for the sharp clap of his hand against Midoriya's face.

It never comes though, Izuku catching his wrist before his blow has time to make contact. Midoriya stares at him in shock.

Reo scowls, ripping his hand away. "I trusted you," is all he says, turning away from the boy. "You don't *think* ," the seventeen-year-old spits, "You don't *listen* . You don't *understand* ." He bows his head low over his workable, a cool anger sizzling beneath his skin before Tsukauchi spins on him again. His fingers are tangled in the fabric over his own heart. There are angry tears in his glowing amber eyes. "You've got people who worry about you too. You're fifteen, not forty. You don't have to do everything by yourself. You don't have to put your life on the line all the time." Reo swipes furiously at the water gathering in his eyes.

Midoriya can only stare, mouth parted like he wants to say something though nothing is ever said. He can't bring himself to apologize, not for something he doesn't regret. But, the anger and the pain and the worry that swirls through his friend's eyes is like the beginnings of a storm. It's a fiery inferno that sweeps through the verdant forest growing inside of Izuku's eyes. The vigilante feels the welling of tears like the coming of rain, his eyes swirl with gray thunderclouds. Polluted rain prickles at his eyes, rain polluted by the guilt he feels at seeing his friend cry because of him.

He was crying because of him.

"Idiot," Reo mutters, pressing the palms of his hands into his eyes as he turns his back towards him.

Midoriya doesn't know what to do. He wants to reach out a hand, wants to comfort his friend like Reo has always done for him. Izuku wants to assure him that he's alright, that he's not hurt. But, he doesn't know how the other would take it, doesn't know if his touch would be a welcome one.

Reo is angry, furious, and emotions like that aren't something commonly seen on the older teen's face. There's only one other time that Midoriya can recall where this sort of anger made itself apparent.

"You died!" Reo's voice echoes in his head, *"You went in to try and find her without a plan and without preparation and without telling anyone, without telling me. What would've happened if that man hadn't decided to*

bring you back?"

The hand Midoriya had unconsciously extended towards his friend's back lowers.

"I'm sorry for worrying you," Izuku murmurs, bowing his head in shame.

"But you'd do it again, wouldn't you."

He hesitates for only moment. "Yes," he answers quietly. "If there's so much as a fraction of a chance for me to save someone I won't allow myself to sit still."

Reo lets out a defeated sigh, walking towards the bed to sit down. "I know." There's a moment of silence as the teen shuffles across the room. "If you think about it we really haven't known each other for that long," Reo murmurs, perching himself on the edge of his bed. "But already, I don't know what I'd do if you," he pauses, struggling to say the next words, "I don't want you to die Midoriya."

Izuku moves towards the bed, quietly sitting down next to him, springs creaking beneath his added weight.

"The heroes can save her you know," Tsukauchi whispers, "All I'm asking is that you try to focus on saving the people that no one else is able to. The heroes know she's out there and they know who she's with even if they're not sure where she is yet. You told me yourself that this is a big organization. I think they've proven that they're not like some of the smaller groups of thugs that you've taken on before." Tsukauchi lets his hands fall limply into his lap.

"You're right," Izuku murmurs, studying his discolored knuckles. He reaches a hand up to his face, wondering if there's any blood on it.

"I know," Reo huffs with a laugh. The banter serves to lighten the mood for only a few moments before it falls again. "You're wearing blinders like some sort of racehorse Midoriya, blindly rushing forward without checking your peripheral. You've given info to the police about groups weaker than these guys because you were worried that you wouldn't be able to handle it. You knew your limits then," his friend murmurs quietly, "Please remember them now too." The older boy pushes himself up with a heavy sigh, heading towards his door, Midoriya watching his progress across the room. "Let's get you cleaned up at least. Go ahead and change out of the rest of your hoodie and stuff. I need to check you for wounds too. You could be in

shock or something. I should've checked the moment you came in."

Midoriya tugs off his hoodie with a grunt, inspecting it once it's off. He's busy wiggling one of his pinkies through the small hole near the center of his chest when Reo comes back into the room with a wet washcloth for the small splatters of blood hidden among his stippling of freckles.

"What's that from?" Reo asks, setting the first aid kit on his work desk.

"The third guy tried to run me through with a katana," the vigilante mutters before lifting the vest that'd saved his life over his head, tossing it on the bed beside him. Midoriya cranes his head downwards to look at the bruise forming where it struck.

"Serves you right for being somewhere you shouldn't have." Tsukauchi's eyes darken. "If he'd hit you anywhere else you'd be dead, or at the very least severely wounded and in police custody. You realize that right?"

Izuku grimances, dragging the washcloth Reo hands him across his face, scrubbing at his cheeks until they're red from something other than another man's blood. "Yeah."

"Are you hurt anywhere else?"

"I don't think I'm any worse than usual." He grins sheepishly over at his friend. "These guys were supposed to be tough, but I look like I usually do so does that mean I'm getting better at this?"

Reo ignores the comment, rolling his seat over towards the other, sliding up to inspect his injuries. "There's not much I can do about that bruise," he says, tapping distractedly at the boy's chest before taking Izuku's hands in his, checking his knuckles. "What about your legs? Any injuries on those?"

"They're fine."

Tsukauchi looks up, narrowed eyes locking with the fifteen-year-old. "It's times like these that make me wish I had my uncle's quirk."

Midoriya huffs a laugh. "I'm fine."

"Now that's definitely a lie. I know you're not fine." Reo starts in on cleaning the younger boy's busted knuckles. "You're hands wouldn't

be like this if you were fine, those are well made gloves. Your knuckles can't be damaged so easily with those. And there wouldn't be blood splattered on your face if you were fine. You wouldn't have started pacing around my room the moment you got here if you were fine. You wouldn't have that look on your face if you were fine."

The vigilante stills, watching as Tsukauchi wipes at his wounds. *What kind of face am I making?*

"It's okay not to be fine you know," Reo says quietly, "She wasn't there, you didn't get a second chance at saving her. It's not your fault that bad guys do bad things. And you're not the only one who takes on the responsibility to try and stop them. You're not alone. You think you're the only vigilante? You think you're the only one trying to save people for something other than money?" Tsukuachi swabs a bit of hydrogen peroxide in and around his cuts, the wounds bubbling up. "You think you're the only one who beats themselves up for not saving someone?" The teen dabs antibiotics across the knuckles that have busted, "You think that my uncle doesn't drive himself mad trying to get you off the streets? That All Might doesn't get angry at himself for failing to save someone? You're not perfect Midoriya. And anyone who expects you to be has never put their lives on the line for someone else."

"I know I don't have to be perfect," Midoriya mutters, watching as the older teen bandages his knuckles. "But I want to be able to save everyone I can."

"That's fine," Reo says, glancing up at him. "I'm sure lots of heroes feel like that. But you have to live within your means, know your limits. You won't be able to save everyone you come across. But, you told me that you knew that from the beginning. You have the ability to save a lot of people Midoriya, you've proven that. So, if you die, if Pied Piper disappears..." Tsukauchi gently covers the fifteen-year-old's hand with his own. "If he disappears then all of that ends there, all that potential to save people would be gone just like that. So please take care of yourself. If not for your sake or mine or your mother's then for the sake of all the people you'll save in the future."

Midoriya jerks awake, a choked plea of "come back" on his lips. The boy blinks up at the ceiling, heart in his throat and choking on his fear as he claws his way up into a seated position. He's wearing one of Reo's t-shirts and he's still in the lower half of his vigilante gear and burning in his left eye tell him he'd left his contact in. Izuku looks

around the room, finding Tsukauchi passed out in his desk chair, arms resting on his desk and curled beneath his head like a pillow.

We fell asleep , he thinks as his nightmare dispels. *You're fine.*

"You're fine." In his head the oil-slick maw creeks opens and from it spills the caustic thoughts that he doubts he'll ever be able to rid himself of. *"But, she's still suffering."*

"Reo! I'm not telling you again! If you're not up in the next minute I'm dragging you out of bed myself!" The voice of his friend's mother at the door drowns out the acidulous words of the monster in his head. They guide him back into reality, releasing him from his nightmares for the time being.

Tsukauchi shifts at his desk, groaning as he slowly drags himself into consciousness.

"40 seconds!"

His friend groans again, louder this time before he finally raises his head. There's dried drool crusted on the corner of his mouth, amber eyes bleary with sleep as he turns to find Midoriya still sitting on his bed.

They stare at each other for a moment.

"You've got 30 seconds before I'm coming in! I don't care if you stayed up late again!"

Their eyes widen.

Midoriya scrambles out of bed, darting towards the window.

"I'm awake Mom!" Reo shouts, rushing to shove the fifteen-year-old's scattered vigilante gear under his bed and beneath his covers as Izuku crawls out the window, collapsing onto the fire escape outside.

"We've got less than an hour to get to your grandfather's place." Misaki scolds, throwing the door open as Midoriya presses himself further into the freezing metal grate, keeping himself out of sight. "I told you not to say up late before I went to bed, when did you go to sleep last night?" The cold metal bites into his palms, morning air nipping at his exposed skin. "You know what? I don't even want to know, please just get ready. And close your window, it's already winter."

“It helps me wake up in the morning,” the seventeen-year-old quickly lies.

“Then go outside and close the window behind you. Don’t let all the heat out.”

He hears footsteps making their way back out of Reo’s room before he listening to the door shut and the lock click into place. Izuku pushes himself up, peaking over the window sill to find Tsukauchi leaning his back against the bedroom door.

He looks absolutely exhausted. They both look absolutely exhausted.

Midoriya sighs, pushing himself the rest of the way up as he takes a seat on fire escape’s stairs. He drops his head into his hands, hunching in on himself.

He can hear Reo’s socked feet shuffling inside as he makes his way towards the window, leaning against the sill. “Do you need to borrow some clothes?”

Izuku thinks about the offer for a moment before shaking his head. “I think I’ll try some casual patrolling today,” Midoriya mutters before he puts himself in action, grabbing his boots off the steps beside him and lacing them up. Reo pushes away from the window, stepping back inside to gather the vigilante’s various belongings. “I’ll just tell my mom that I left early again and what not.”

The boy tugs off Reo’s t-shirt as his friend passes him his vest and hoodie, quickly slipping them on before the air has a chance to chill him further. “You sure you’re up for it?”

“Probably not,” Izuku confesses, pulling his hood up over his hair. “But I refuse to do what I did last time. I can’t just disappear off the grid again. There are too many people to save.”

Tsukauchi sighs, passing him the rest of his gear and some eye drops for his crimson stained eye. “Make sure you eat something,” the seventeen-year-old says, leaning out the window to watch as his friend buckles his belt around his waist and tugs his gloves on over his fingers, colored red from cold. “And don’t push yourself. You’ve been through a lot recently.”

The vigilante pulls his mask up over his nose, blowing large, heated breaths into it to warm his cheeks again. “I won’t.”

The house looks different in the daylight, less intimidating and more deary. The front gate is crisscrossed with caution tape and a few police cars still line the property's perimeter. He stares at it from across the street. The paint is pale and peeling in places, gate rusted, and what little yard he can see from here is overgrown. It looks normal in the daylight.

It doesn't look like a place he died trying to find.

I shouldn't be here.

And he shouldn't. He really shouldn't. He's not one of those people who return to the scene of the crime. But, even after what Reo had told him just hours earlier, it was hard to let go, hard to forget. It's hard to just *give up* on the girl that he's spent so long just trying to find. He doesn't want to hand the investigation over to someone else. It feels personal. It is personal.

But, he knows now that there's not much else he can do from here. He's out of leads, out of lives. He can't afford to keel over on a case that he's known he wasn't going to be able to handle from the beginning. The boy curses, sinking in on himself as he turns away from the house.

Midoriya slips his vigilante phone out of one his many pockets, dialing one of the only contacts he has on there.

"Piper," Giran's voice drawls over the speaker, "It seems you survived. Guess you didn't kick the bucket after all huh?"

The vigilante sighs, "Seems like it." He gently closes his gloved fist around his staff, bruised skin stretching over his knuckles. Something in his stomach twists. He'd survived alright.

An oil-slick voice hisses in his mind, coiling around his insides like serpent. *"You may be alive. But, the question of, "should you be allowed to continue doing so," remains."*

"I guess that request of yours was all for nothin'."

"No," Midoriya says, leaning against a nearby wall. The house is still visible from here. "I survived this time, but if I ever end up dying I still want you to do what we talked about."

Giran taps his finger against his desk, studying the laquered wood grain. "You're really prepared to die?"

“Of course not.”

Giran huffs a laugh at the boy’s response, reclining back in his office chair to stare at the offwhite ceiling tiles above him.

“Dying is something I’d like to avoid, but I have to remind myself that it’s a possibility everytime I go out. If you live by the sword then you’ll fall by it as well. That’s how the world works.”

“That’s such an old fashioned way of looking at things,” the broker hums, “It’s not wrong, but there are plenty of people who don't live by the sword and still die by it. It’s not as much of an exclusive club as you think it is. But, I’ll keep my promise Piper,” Giran sighs, “I’m a man of my word if nothing else.”

The vigilante glances back towards the house one last time before turning away. “Thank you.”

r/PiedPiper · Posted by u/goldenboiz three days ago

Piper Working w/ the Police?!?!?!

346 upvotes

So my cousin works with one of the police stations in Musutafu and he was evidently involved in this little raid collaboration thing that was going on and he told me that Piper was there??? He wouldn’t tell me why or how he was there which made me think that it was something pretty secretive?? Like what if Piper was working with the police on this?????

.

JestBeanist 864 points · two days ago

I think it’s more likely that Piper happened to be there or showed up on his own sometime during it. He’s spent all this time avoiding the police so I doubt that he’d want to be around them for extended periods

.

Mia542069 7 points · two days ago

I don't think Piper would hesitate to work with the police but he doesn't seem stupid enough to get involved unless someone's life is on the line. Plus this is the police we're talking about. It's highly unlikely that they'd need to bring Piper in when they can just ask a pro hero for help.

.

goldenboiz 1k points · one day ago

I just don't get why my cousin would try to hush it up if he wasn't working with them though??

.

Mia542069 7 points · 13 hours ago

It could be that it's something embarrassing for the police/heroes that were involved? I mean we haven't heard about him getting caught which means he probably slipped out right from under their nose

.

goldenboiz 1k points · 2 hours ago

I mean if they were forced to make a deal with him then that also could've been embarrassing for the police and stuff??? Being forced to let him go in return for his temporary cooperation or something??? That's gotta be a major blow to their pride

.

N-s0mkneeack 864 points · two days ago

anyone who works with the police is dumb couldn't be me

.

vin-pepper 2k points · 23 hours ago

We're finally getting new Piper content and I've never been happier

"You're certain he said "he should've kept me dead"?" Aizawa asks, brows stitching themselves together.

Naomasa nods solemnly, head falling into his hands. He feels exhausted. It's already been a week since the raid and many nights he still found himself unable to sleep well. But, he forces himself to keep going.

"Do you think it could be in relation to a quirk?" Shouta asks.

"It's got to be," Naomasa mumbles, staring tiredly down at the table. He sends a glance towards his empty cup of coffee, debating whether he should flag the waitress down for more. "The only question is if it's Piper's quirk or someone else's, someone assumably with the Precepts." He gives in waving the waitress over for a refill. "He did tell me to be wary of someone he met while he was originally surveying the area, told me not to let him touch me but didn't say why."

The hero's brow rises. "You don't think that's why?"

"I can only hope that wasn't the reason." The detective's head bows further, fingers trailing through the back of his hair. "I still can't believe I let him just walk away," Tsukauchi murmurs. "He could be safely in police custody if I didn't hesitate."

"You're not the only one at fault," Aizawa says, taking another sip of his own coffee. "From what I heard the support heroes on site didn't stop him either."

Naomasa shakes his head. "They didn't know any better though. It's not like Piper is a huge name in the hero world yet, let alone his appearance. He's gotten some new gear since you last saw him. If you didn't know any better he could easily pass as an underground hero. People don't really think much in terms of vigilante's anymore."

Aizawa nods. "Most people think in black and white. You're either a law abiding citizen or you're a villain, there's no inbetween for people like Piper."

"And because he doesn't play the part of villain people just assume he's a hero."

Shouta brings his cup back to his lips, keeping it there for a moment as he murmurs around the lip of the mug, "He uses it to his advantage."

"I need to find him," the detective sighs.

“How’s the investigation going outside of everything that happened at the raid?” Aizawa asks.

Naomasa rubs tiredly at his temples. “We’ve got a long list of possible suspects. I’ve been trying to work through it over the last few months, but that quirk enhancement drug that you hear about in the US all the time has started showing up here. Forensics says it’s a lot weaker, but it’s still a major problem. It’s been keeping everyone busy.”

Aizawa’s brow rises. “I didn’t think police would be onto that just yet. I only just started hearing about it.”

“We’ve been getting more and more reports about it and it’s been keeping me from being able to meet with all the Piper suspects myself.” Naomasa checks the time, taking another sip of coffee. “Speaking of, I've got a bit of free time today so I should try and talk to a few of them while I can.”

“I heard you’ve been tracking them down manually, why not just call them all to the station? Wouldn’t that be easier?” Aizawa asks, finishing off the remainder of his coffee.

“Probably,” the detective sighs, “But, if we tell the actual Piper to show up do you think he’d actually do it?”

“So then watch to see who doesn’t show up.”

Naomasa shakes his head. “He’s tricky enough trying to catch him normally. I don’t want to drive him underground.”

“Understandable I guess. The brat managed to escape from not one, but two UA faculty on two separate occasions.”

Tsukauchi huffs a strained laugh. “Don’t forget about the number two hero either.” He takes another large gulp of coffee before paying, and saying his goodbyes.

There’s a knock at the Midoriya’s apartment door as the mother and son mill about the kitchen, putting away leftovers and washing dishes. “Can you see who that is sweetie?” Inko asks, the woman continuing to wash dishes.

“Sure,” he hums absentmindedly before making his way to the front of the house. The boy peeks out the peephole, freezing at the familiarity of the man standing in the hall. He doesn’t want to open the door.

Part of him wants to leave the man where he is, wants to turn around, walk out onto their small balcony and scale down the building from there because nothing good can come from that man being at their apartment.

But, what if it's about Reo?

The boy curses internally, taking a deep breath before he turns the lock and swings the door open.

"Midoriya-kun," Naomasa greets.

He forces a faulty smile on his lips. "Tsukauchi-san. What are you doing here?" It's been a week since he last saw the man at the raid. He'd been pointing a weapon at his chest then, and now they stand before each other amicably.

The detective pulls his hat off, smiling tiredly at the boy. "I've been meaning to talk to you. Things have been a bit hectic the last few months so it's been hard to find some time to track you down."

If I'm being honest though, the detective thinks, *I've been putting off this meeting with Midoriya-kun. He's a good kid. I don't want to suspect him.*

Midoriya huffs a quiet laugh. "I'm at your nephew's house often enough. I shouldn't be too hard to find."

The detective smiles sheepishly. "I haven't been that desperate yet. I tracked down another boy from your dojo first. Besides law requires a parent or guardian to be present for this next conversation."

This about Piper again, Midoriya's brain supplies him.

"Izuku who is it?" his mother calls from the kitchen.

The boy reluctantly steps aside to let the detective in. "Come on in. We were just cleaning up after dinner. You're not hungry are you? Reo said you've been busy recently."

Naomasa lets out a light chuckle as the man slips his shoes off at the door. "No need to worry. I ate with a colleague not long ago."

Izuku nods silently, leading the man down the hall, mind roaring with all the possibilities. But, as his brain goes round and round he continuously lands on the same answer. *Piper, this is obviously about Piper.*

“Mom!” Midoriya calls, “Detective Tsukauchi is here.” Anxiety bubbles up in his chest when he thinks of all the vigilante gear scattered in his room and the spread of leads on Eri and Kogane still taped up in the back of his closet.

“A detective?” The two make their way into the kitchen where his mother carefully wipes her damp hands with one of their dish rags.

What the hell am I supposed to do? It’s been months since our first conversation about Piper. I didn’t think I was a suspect anymore.

“Midoriya-san, it’s nice to meet you. My name is Detective Tsukauchi. I’m with Musutafu Police, quirk crimes division. I was hoping to ask your son a few questions.”

Inko leads them into the living room where Naomasa carefully takes a seat on the offered chair and the two Midoriyas take their places on the couch. “Is he in trouble?”

It’s fine. I can do this. I managed to make it through his quirk that first time and I wasn’t even trying.

“Not at all. This is just a precautionary measure. As far as I know Midoriya-kun hasn’t done anything bad. He’s a good kid.” He offers the woman a gentle smile to soothe her nerves. “I’m just asking a few questions about an ongoing investigation that I’m currently leading. Law requires that a guardian is present when I ask these which is why I came here. Hopefully this won’t take up too much of your time.”

I can do this.

Inko fiddles nervously with the dishrag in her hands. She glances briefly at her son. “I guess that’s alright.”

“Thank you.” Naomasa’s head dips in gratitude before he turns towards the vigilante. “Are you ready Midoriya-kun?”

There’s a nervous fear rising in his throat. *All you have to do is tell the truth and dance around any questions. If he asks what I was doing the night of the raid all I have to tell him is that I was at Reo’s. I can do this. I can do this.* The boy manages a nod.

“Are you Pied Piper?”

Chapter End Notes

Pied Piper's one year anniversary can and went just like that. I honestly can't believe that I've been working on this thing for an entire year. It's actually crazy to think about it adslfjlkfdj
I wanted to put out a chapter on the 16th since that was the anniversary, but I'm like 20 minutes too late for that lmaooo
Anyway! I hope you all enjoyed the chapter! Me and my beta conconspired about that cliffhanger you all get at the end, sorry, not sorry uwu. Finals are coming up in two weeks so everything is going to be hectic for me, even during thanksgiving break, but I'll try to get the chapter out soonish so you all don't have to suffer too much after that cliffhanger :)) Thank you all for your continuous support and the many wonderful comments and kudos! I don't really talk about numbers a lot but not only did we hit 90k words, but we also hit 600 comments, 500 bookmarks, 2k kudos and almost 24k hits!!!! THAT'S ABSOLUTELY WILD EVERY TIME I THINK ABOUT IT
I love you all and really truely thank you for all the support! I wish you all well! Until next time!!

UY Scuti

Chapter Notes

TW//: mentions of blood

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Are you Pied Piper?”

Midoriya’s brain shuts down. “What?”

Next to him Inko’s delicate brows furrow inward. “Who? Detective what’s the meaning of your visit?”

“There’s been a young vigilante running around Musutafu recently,” Naomasa says solemnly, eyes flickering towards the boy’s mother. “We have a list of suspects, Midoriya-san. We’re simply covering all of our bases. Midoriya-kun and my nephew are very good friends so please believe me when I say that I think he’s a good kid. I don’t want to suspect him, but as it stands he has enough similarities to land him on our suspects list.”

“You think Izuku is a vigilante?” She asks, confusion and fear mingling in her voice.

“I’m not a vigilante,” Midoriya mutters. It’s a quiet and half hearted statement.

It’s also a *lie*.

Naomasa’s brain stalls, eyes widening in surprise.

Midoriya can tell the moment the words come out of his mouth that the other knows now. Can tell that the man has called his bluff, that his elaborate facade has crumbled beneath the weight of the most straightforward question the detective could have thought to ask.

“Are you Pied Piper?”

“Midoriya-kun,” Naomasa breathes. And Izuku can see all of the connections being made in the man’s head. Can see all of the puzzle pieces the detective is watching fall into place and they all fit so perfectly. It’s no longer a question of do they fit, but how.

Fix it, the vigilante's mind roars. *I don't know how.* But he does. He does know how because in the eyes of the law *Midoriya Izuku* is already registered as a vigilante.

Piper looks towards his lap, his shamrock curls hiding his widening eyes. He fiddles with his fingers silently for a moment. "I mean," the boy murmurs quietly, thinking as he speaks, "There was that one convenience store thing with Eimi."

Eimi , the first person he's ever rescued and the only lawfully documented case of *Midoriya Izuku* committing vigilantism.

Tsukauchi's hand stills above the metaphorical puzzle laid out before him.

"Hogai Eimi, of course. I remember that. Officer Fujimori told me all about that after we got back to the station. I don't guess you've saved any more little girls since then, have you?" Naomasa laughs, the slope of his shoulders relaxing.

Ruby red eyes glint from the shadows of Midoriya's mindscape. This is something he does have to lie about. "No." It's still a sore point. Even a week of trying to take Reo's advice hadn't been enough to soothe the ache in his chest when Eri came to mind.

I just want to see her safe.

"You won't be able to see her safe if you're dead," Reo's voice reminds him internally.

Across from him, Naomasa offers him a nod, sobering the mood. "Alright, there's just one last thing I need to confirm and then I'll get out of your hair. Midoriya-kun could you tell me what you were doing last Saturday night?"

Inko fidgets beside the boy. "Detective, why are you asking about then? Did something happen on Saturday?"

Tsukauchi soothes her with a smile. "I promise it's just a standard question." He looks back towards Izuku, silently encouraging him to answer.

"Last Saturday?" Izuku asks in order to get himself more time. *That was the night of the raid.* Naomasa nods. *I just need something that can get past his quirk.* "I'd say I was sleeping," Midoriya starts, "but I wasn't able to sleep much that night."

Truth.

“Any particular reason why?”

“I’ve been pretty stressed out recently, I had a lot of things going on,” Midoriya looks off to the side, genuinely embarrassed. “I talked with Reo the other day though and he helped me work through some of it so I’ve been better.”

Truth.

Naomasa feels a small rush of relief, he didn’t want to suspect the only friend he’s seen his nephew bring home of something as serious as vigilantism. “I’m glad to hear that. I’m sure you’ve had your hands full applying to hero schools right?”

“I’ve actually only applied to UA,” Izuku says sheepishly, scratching at the back of his head. “I should probably apply to more, but UA has been my dream since I was a kid so…”

The man nods along with the fifteen-year-old’s words. “UA’s a good school,” he says as he pushes himself up. “I apologize for taking up your time. That’s all the questions I needed to ask.” He bows at the both of them, the two rising from their own spots and returning it in kind.

Did I do it? Midoriya asks himself, *Am I in the clear?*

The vigilante shows the man out, walking him to the door.

Reo’s words come back to him as he watches the detective slips his shoes back on, *“You think that my uncle doesn’t drive himself mad trying to get you off the streets?”*

Guilt takes the place of the vigilante’s fear. “You should sleep more Tsukauchi-san,” Izuku says, “You’ll burn yourself out if you’re not careful.”

Naomasa blinks at him, surprised to see the genuine worry swelling like ocean waves in his eyes. “It comes with the job I’m afraid,” he replies softly, a half laugh escaping him as a small smile graces his lips.

“Even so, taking care of yourself is important. You have to live within your means, know your limits,” he murmurs, repeating Reo’s own words to him. “You have the ability to save a lot of people Tsukauchi-

san." It makes him feel like a hypocrite. "So, if something happens to you because you overworked yourself then all of that potential could be gone just like that when you need it the most."

I want to make people's lives easier, but, he thinks, *I don't want to do it at the cost of your suffering.*

"Reo's worried about you, you know? Misaki-san too." Midoriya flushes, looking away. "Sorry if that was too forward. It's just that Reo and I are good friends and he can tell you've been pretty stressed recently. He talks about you sometimes and I can tell he's worried."

Naomasa dissolves into a kind yet weary smile. "It's a bit forward, but it's something I think I needed to hear. I'm glad Reo has a friend like you Midoriya. You're a good kid."

I'm really not. I worry him just as much.

"Your existence is a caustic one. You only serve to hurt those closest to you."

Midoriya's fingers twitch uncomfortably. Izuku's smile wobbles at the edges. "I don't know what I'd do without him."

Truth.

And he really doesn't. Midoriya knows he'd be dead or captured several times over by now without the youngest Tsukauchi's help, knows he'd be lost in a void of hate and self-loathing without him.

The detective stands, slipping his hat back on. "I'll be off then. Please enjoy the rest of your night."

"You too," the boy murmurs, shutting the door behind him. Izuku deflates against the door already in borderline tears from relief.

"Did the detective leave?" Inko calls from the living room.

"Yeah," the fifteen-year-old croaks back. He makes his way back down the hall to find the woman staring out the balcony's doors.

"I just don't get why he would suspect you of all people," Inko mutters, biting at her thumbnail.

"They came to talk to all of the dojos in the area a few months back," Izuku informs her. "I hear the vigilante they're looking for uses Muay Thai to fight so it's not that much of a stretch." The boy smiles

sheepishly at his mother. “I’m pretty good at it, you know.”

Inko huffs a laugh, turning to her son and enveloping him in a hug. “My Zuku,” she mutters, swaying back and forth, “So strong and brave.”

Things don’t quite go back to normal. But, neither he nor Reo expected them to.

He’s haunted by new nightmares, held down by new demons, suffocated beneath new waves of anger, anger at those villains, anger at himself. Death and failure leave scars of their own kind, ones that aren’t visible to your average person.

For those closest to him there’s only a feeling of something being *wrong* , and the wrongness itself is something that’s hard to pinpoint. For Hirano it’s merely a difference in his stride, for Ji-woo it’s his heightened determination. His mother’s eyes catch on the slight downtick of his usual smile, and Reo takes notice of the rising of cold fire blazing in the vigilante’s eyes.

But, for Giran it’s the increase of late night phone calls and meetings over the next month with the infamous vigilante Pied Piper.

Giran is an information broker. He makes a living on the buying and selling of secrets. It’s his job to *know* . Because of this, it didn’t take long for the man to hear about what had happened the night of December the 11th. People like to talk when money’s involved. So, like Reo, Giran knows the reasoning behind the vigilante’s change.

“I need a lead, Giran. It’s been a month already. I know you have info. The only question is how much is it going to cost.”

The broker huffs a laugh, “Pullin’ out all the stops now, are we?”

“I can’t afford to stop anymore.” Midoriya crouches on top of one of the buildings lining the edges of the redlight district. The clear, crystalline night skies feel almost foreign. The constellations have shifted since summer. The ones he’s used to seeing so clearly seem to have disappeared overnight. Time has passed so quickly, too quickly. There’s not enough time to save everyone.

The sky is crisscrossed with airplane trails and dotted with stars. The air is crisp, cold, biting. “Last week you told me you didn’t have any new info, but we both know that was a lie. I let it slide because I

thought maybe you were still looking into it, but I feel like that's not the case anymore."

Giran leans against the balcony's railing, staring out across his warehouse and watching as a few people mill about below. A woman with strength enhancement carries a box twice her size towards the far end of the room, setting it down carefully on the floor. The man sighs. "You got me there. It'll cost more than usual though."

"I figured."

Giran rubs at his brow, slipping back into his office to take a drag of another cigarette. "There's a man, used to be ex yakuza, part of the Overhaul's group before it became Overhaul's. He turned to petty theft after leaving them. He might have some info that you're lookin' for. "

Midoriya sighs on the other end of the phone. "I guess you'll tell me where he is *after* I pay you?"

A cheshire grin pulls at Giran's lips. "You know me too well." He sucks in another lungful of smoke, exhaling slowly.

"Just tell me how much and I'll bring it as soon as I can."

The broker hums a soft tune, calculating prices. "How about this, it'll cost you a favor."

"You haven't even cashed in the first one."

"I know."

On the other end of the phone the vigilante shakes his head, breath fogging in the air. "I don't deal in favors, Giran. That was a one time thing, an accident."

The man takes another long drag of his cigarette, exhaling smoke with his next words, "Fine fine. It'll be the usual plus an extra two-hundred thousand."

"That much?"

A cat-like grin slips onto Giran's lips. "There's always that favor."

"You'll get your money."

"Always a pleasure doin' business with ya Piper." Giran's response is greeted with a dial tone.

“Shoda Yuuto, age thirty-one, height 5’11, strength enhancement quirk.” Midoriya glances down at the slightly blurred photo Giran had given him yesterday. It’d taken the boy a while to track him down. The vigilante ended up having to play a waiting game, sitting around and waiting for the guy to turn up in the area Giran told him he frequented. “His quirk might be tough to deal with,” the vigilant murmurs. Midoriya peeks around the corner, watching as the orange haired man from the photo peers into a few of the cars scattered in the parking garage they’re in. *I’ll need to take him by surprise.*

Midoriya fails to take him by surprise.

Piper’s reflection in the car window gives him away and the criminal whips around and throws a punch at him immediately, not waiting for any kind of identification before the brawl begins. The fifteen-year-old dodges the punch, fist whizzing by his ear with a quiet whistle that signals his quirk is already in use.

It does more than make him stronger. The punch slams into the frame of the car behind him, the man hissing at the impact.

Midoriya looks to check and see if the car is dented or not and his efforts earn the vigilante a knee to the gut. His Kevlar vest takes the brunt of the blow, but with the man’s quirk he’s sure it’ll do more than leave him breathless. An elbow rams into his back in his hunched over position, threatening to send him to the ground.

The vigilante slips away through the adrenaline and stumbles back, getting out from between the cars and wheezing a curse. “I want to know about the Percepts,” he hisses.

“And I don’t want anything to do with ‘em,” the other fires back.

Midoriya slowly rights himself and slips past another blow aimed towards him, deflecting it with his staff. “All I need is a base location.”

“And give them more of a reason to hunt me down?” the man laughs breathily. “Fat chance.”

The vigilante curses under his breath. *I need this info.*

A well-timed kick slips past the fifteen-year-old’s defense, slamming into his side with all the force the man’s quirk can offer. The kick

throws him to the ground, sending him tumbling across the concrete in a tangle of limbs.

He feels dazed trying to stand back up. *Possible concussion.* Blood trickles around the back of his ear, slipping down the side of his neck.

Midoriya stumbles into a crouch, unable to stand just yet. The villain approaches him casually, staring down at the boy. “You underestimate their new leader, kid.”

Midoriya swipes at the blood on his neck. “I’m the last person who’d underestimate that man,” the vigilante tells him quietly. He looks up at the villain with slightly unfocused eyes. But they’re eyes that have known death, eyes that have seen the otherside.

They catch the man off guard. “You—”

“Now that’s not any way to treat your fellow man.” The booming voice echoes through the parking garage, startling the two of them. The voice hurts his head. The villain pauses, head turning to find the source of the noise.

Above the vigilante the man tenses, freezing in place upon seeing whoever it is. The vigilante uses it to his advantage. He fumbles for his belt, scrambling to find his balance as he digs an electrified escrima stick into the man’s ribs. Izuku releases a relieved breath as the criminal goes down, unconscious for the moment.

“My apologies,” the voice echoes again, coming closer, “it seems you had the situation handled.”

Midoriya’s head whips up, immediately straightening. *Who is—*

The vigilante’s heart stops.

Midoriya’s eyes widen significantly, fearfully, but full of awe. A strangled noise escapes his throat, one that he has no control over. “A-All Might.”

The hero’s smile is blinding and the vigilante feels more than just a little dazed looking at him. *That might just be the concussion .*

“I’m glad you’re okay, young man. You seemed to be struggling a bit there so I was worried! But, it seems I need not have been.”

“H-Hai!” The vigilante squeaks out, stumbling into a standing position

past the pain in his head.

“Are you okay young man?” The hero’s smile doesn’t waver, but his blonde brows furrow inward with concern. “You took quite the hit there.”

“Ah!” Izuku’s voice cracks “I-I’m fine!” he manages.

“If you’re certain…”

Midoriya stares on, pied eyes full of total awe. The hero’s mouth parts to speak more and the boy hangs on to the aching boom of every syllable. He sways on his feet for a moment, dazed again and losing track of what the man is saying. He snaps back into the present.

“—leave the rest to you!” The hero looks towards the entrance of the parking garage. “I assume you’ve already contacted the police, so I should leave before they arrive.” He grins at the boy, “I’d only be in the way.”

“H-Hia!” The vigilante agrees immediately, the hero’s words and their meaning taking longer than usual to process as All Might makes to leave. “Ah! W-wait!” The boy stutters, fumbling for his pockets. “Before you go! Can I have your autograph!” The boy finds a pen but no paper.

He tries to come up with a good solution as quickly as he can. *Something permanent, something I won’t have to worry about getting damaged.* The solution he comes to isn’t a good one. It’s not the smartest idea, in all honestly it’s probably one of his stupidest. Stupider than being best friends with the nephew of the man hunting him down, stupider than turning up outside of UA with Snipe’s gun in a plastic bag, stupider than a quirkless nobody like Midoriya Izuku being a vigilante.

It could be over here, identity exposed, life ruined. His hopes of ever saving anyone else could be completely erased in the next few moments.

Midoriya quickly drops into a near ninety degree bow, hiding his face as he slips his mask off and offers it from that same angle for the hero to sign. “Please sign this!”

“Ah! Of course!”

But all Midoriya can see, past the throbbing headache, and the

booming voice, and the blinding smile, is the hero he'd looked up to for so long. His inspiration for becoming a vigilante, his need to save people. The roots of all his hopes and dreams as a child is standing before him.

"I have a great respect for underground heroes like yourself you know! It takes a lot to live in the spotlight, but even more so to purposefully live outside of it."

The vigilante straightens immediately, keeping both of his gloved hands excitedly cupped around the bottom half of his face as All Might takes the mask, quickly signing it with a smile.

Tears burn at the corners of Midoriya's eyes. *He thinks I'm a hero. He thinks I'm a hero. He thinks I'm a hero.* Midoriya drops back into a deep bow as he takes the mask from the man's hands, quickly slipping it back on. *He thinks I'm a hero. He thinks I'm a hero. He thinks I'm a hero.* The mask reeks of sharpie fumes that serve only to make his headache worse, but his smile resumes to dim.

"I'm afraid I'm a bit short on time right now, so I'll be off!"

Midoriya chokes out a noise, caught off guard, "O-Of course! I can handle everything from here, thank you for helping! It was great being able to meet you! This will definitely be a family heirloom!"

The hero pats him on the back in a way that has the fifteen-year-old stumbling forward a bit, too star struck to be phased by it before All Might steps out from under the parking garage's roof, crouches, and takes off into the sky.

It takes a few moments for Midoriya to register everything, only able to stare at his hero's afterimage. Eventually he stumbles his way back towards the villain, collapsing next to him. "Holy shit," he whispers.

Beside him the man only groans.

Vigilante Pied Piper Meets ALL MIGHT!! (Gets Autograph!!)

3,341,758 views

5,101 comments

The-bone-faried - 7 hours ago

HOLY SHIT WHERE IS THIS CCTV FOOTAGE FROM HOW DO YOU GET FOOTAGE OF PIPER SO FAST????? THE TIME STAMP IS LITERALLY FROM AN HOUR AGO SHKSGSMSHSKS

the-database-says-ur-stupid - 8 hours ago

…….

Eatsleepcoffeerepeat - 5 hours ago

my brain cant even process the possible repercussions that could come from this video

MDCentral9 - 5 hours ago

BRO I FR THOUGHT ALL MIGHT WAS GONNA PUT THE SMACK DOWN ON HIM EVEN WITH THE TITLE BEING WHAT IT IS

MyWorld_z - 4 hours ago

I don't know how this dude is still alive tbh

SorryITookSoLong - 6 hours ago

I'm glad All Might showed up when he did!!! That fight wasn't looking too good for Piper….

Xxallmight34xx - 2 hours ago

HE! HE GOT TO MEET ALL MIGHT THAT'S AMAZING!!! Sorry had to get that out. So I still didn't see Piper using any quirk… I've been thinking about it since I first saw that video of him with Death Arms but now I'm really curious as to what it could be…

P-PiperStan - 1 hour ago

I wish cctv vids had audio T_T

“You are literally insane Midoriya Izuku.” Reo shakes his head as the boy crawls through his window some time after four. The just beginning to set on the horizon.

The vigilante beams at him, All Might’s signature shifting with the movement of his lips. “How did you even find out already?”

“I spend my free time browsing the internet for news on Piper.”

Midoriya looks up, surprised. “Really?”

Reo laughs. “No! I have post notifications on for the channel that uploads videos of some of your fights.”

“There are channels like that?” Midoriya asks, a little awestruck.

“Dude,” Reo deadpans, “You literally have a whole subreddit dedicated to you, what do you mean “there are channels like that”?”

Izuku flushes.

“It’s the same channel that posted that video of you and Death Arms by the way. I don’t know how they get all of the footage that they do, but it’s good stuff. You know that clip of you getting punched by that duplication villain who said “fuck you! I’m sorry!” before dipping?”

Midoriya sighs as he pulls his hood down, but his smile doesn’t fall. “Unfortunately.”

“That’s on there too.” Tsukauchi grins. “Alright sit down now. Kick up your feet, take off your mask, and tell me all about your fanboy meet and greet.” Tsukauchi slides around the room in his chair, picking up this and that as his friend takes a seat. “Also let me see your head, it looked like you hit it in the video.”

The younger boy laughs lightly. “You’d be right. Please take care of me Dr. Tsukauchi.”

“Wouldn’t need a doctor if you’d stop getting hurt,” Reo mutters.

Midoriya only laughs.

r/PiedPiper · Posted by u/hugzfordrugz two days ago

The Absolute Madlad

289 upvotes

Can we talk about how Piper has met both Endeavor AND All Might and lived to tell the tale?????? Like he literally blew a kiss at Endeavor's son and then today we get security camera footage of him getting an AUTOGRAPH from THE All Might???????

.

Insertusernamehere 489 points · one day ago

how has he still not been caught yet???

.

ImARake38 3k points · one day ago

He literally took his face mask off infront of All Might, potentially exposing his identity to the number one hero, if that's not the definition of a dedicated fanboy then I don't know what is

.

d15app01nt1ng 1k points · 23 hours ago

Okay hear me out but what if Piper is actually a ghost.

The story goes that he was a kid from that was training to be a hero but died before he could save anyone so now he drifts through Musutafu saving everyone that he can

MrElectrode 28 points · 16 hours ago

Bro, I literally saw a video of him getting decked by a villain the other day

.

d15app01nt1ng 1k points · 5 hours ago

Tangible ghost

.

MrElectrode 28 points · 4 hours ago

.....

.

d15app01nt1ng 1k points · 28 minutes ago

Tangible ghost vigilante

.

TurnpikePear 672 points · 7 hours ago

Pied Piper is an All Might stan confirmed

Chapter End Notes

AHHHHHHH!!!! Finals are finally over and we finally have the conclusion to Noamasa's question after a month lmaooo sorry about that Hopefully I'll be able to get back into the swing of things while I'm on break but unfortunately I will make you no promises

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter! Until next time

(Also I noticed I've been getting a few more comments asking for this fic's discord link, but if you would please leave those in my dms via Twitter or Tumblr that would be greatly appreciated!)

Redshift

Chapter Notes

TW://

Heavy themes of Suicide and Depression

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tsukauchi Naomasa is suffering a breakdown of the most extraordinary kind. He can't believe what he's watching. He's sleep deprived. That's what this is. Midoriya was right, he does need to take better care of himself. But, Sansa's watching the same thing he is. The department is watching the same thing he is. *Hell* almost four million people have watched the same thing he is by the time he finally catches wind of what's happened.

There's Piper fighting and *losing* against some random criminal and then none other than *Yagi Toshinori waltzes* into frame and the fight ends with him having to do nothing more than raise his voice. And then he, like 4 million other people, watches as Piper *removes his mask* to ask for a signature.

Yagi accepts.

Naomasa can't help but laugh. "I'm gonna kill him."

Sansa looks at him, worry shining in those slitted eyes of his, but Naomasa only continues to chuckle as he reaches for his phone.

There's a few rings before there's a click on the other end of the line. He doesn't wait for a response. "You're dead to me."

There's silence. "I'm sorry? Tsukauchi-san this is you, isn't it? I-"

"I cannot *believe* you let that boy get away!" The detective hisses, lowering his voice.

Naomasa can hear the audible confusion on the other side of the line. "Boy? I'm afraid you'll have to be more specific, my friend."

"The boy!" Tsukauchi stresses again, voice rising. "Pied Piper! The kid with the pipe and multicolored eyes! *Hell!* The person whose mask you signed in that stupid parking garage! Damn it Toshinori!" There's a

pauses where the detective sucks in a breath, breathing heavily. He's just so *frustrated.* Frustrated with this job, with this kid, with the dead ends. He's frustrated with the lack of leads and dna and *anything* that could point to who Piper is or why he's doing what he is . He's frustrated with the late nights and the early mornings and the phone calls of false sightings and the intel that *Japan's number one hero* had given that boy his damned autograph. "Do you know how *long* I've been trying to get him in the station?" Naomasa curses, drawing the cautious eyes of those around him. They look surprised. He's not one to yell.

He'd been trying to take better care of himself after his talk with Midoriya, the boy had been right. But, there's only so much that he can do until self care becomes neglect and the people he's trying to protect suffer from it. He tugs roughly at his hair, falling back into his office chair as Sansa looks on in pity. There's a moment of pregnant silence before the detective lets out an exhausted sigh. "I'm sorry, that was uncalled for."

Tsukauchi can hear shuffling on the other end of the speaker. "No apology needed, you seem very distressed. Rather it feels as if I'm the one who needs to apologize? What was it about the young man I met the other day?"

Naomasa sinks further into his seat, leaning his head back to stare as the pock-marked ceiling tiles above him. "He's a vigilante going by the name Pied Piper. We assume he's about the same age as the kids you're gonna be teaching soon."

"A vigilante?" The hero asks, coughing lightly. He can taste copper on his tongue. "That young?"

"Unfortunately."

The hero takes a seat on one of the nearby benches lining the edge of the beach. "I simply assumed it was a new underground hero of some sort. I know you said you'd started chasing a young vigilante recently, but I would've thought you'd already caught them." There's another cough, more copper.

Naomasa lets his eyes fall shut. "Thanks."

"I-I didn't mean anything by it, I'm just surprised he's still causing trouble being so young."

"It's fine," the detective sighs, "Everyone at the station is surprised by

it. Sansa thinks his quirk a form of mild luck enhancement and honestly if he keeps this up I might just have to start agreeing with him."

Toshinori lets out a low chuckle. "You'll have to tell me more about it sometime." There's a moment of silence. "You know, we haven't seen each other in awhile, how about lunch tomorrow?"

"I think you're forgetting something Toshi."

"Forgetting something? Wh– Ah! You're right, of course, my apologies. How about the day after tomorrow then?"

"Sounds like a plan."

Midoriya paces up and down the length of Reo's room just behind the older teen's back. It's early Friday morning, 1:56am, and it's been a week since his encounter with the number one hero and the glow of that man's smile has finally faded enough to reveal what Midoriya had been too blinded to realize in his daze. "I didn't get anything out of that ex yakuza! He didn't tell me anything and I was too starstruck to remember before the police got there! Do you have any *idea* how much money I had to drop for info on that dude?"

"Probably too much," Tsukauchi mutters, busy soldering one of the more delicate pieces of his new project.

"Too much! And it took me so long just to squeeze the info out of Giran and now—!"

"Midoriya," Reo says cutting the other off and gaining his attention. "Don't you have something else to worry about?"

"What?" He asks dumbly. "What do you mean something else? Figuring out where they're keeping that girl is the *only* thing I should even be thinking about right now."

"Midoriya," the seventeen-year-old's tone is flat. "It's entrance exam season."

The younger boy stops pacing, staring blankly at Reo's Ingenium poster in front of him.

"So unless you decided to stop going to school altogether, which I'm sure would only serve up your suspiciousness on the Pied Piper

suspect list, I think your entrance exams would be pretty important as well."

Midoriya deflates. "It's tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? What's tomorrow?" Reo sets aside his tools for a moment, turning to look at the younger boy over his shoulder. He sees Midoriya's pied eyes and that's all it takes for his words' meaning to register. "Wait what do you mean *tomorrow* ?! Why are you here?! Why are you running around town if your test is tomorrow?!"

The fifteen-year-old sits down carefully on the edge of the older teen's bed. He lets his head fall into his hands. "I didn't want to think about it."

This time is Reo who stands up to begin pacing. "I— wait. Is… Is *this* why you've been running around town so much recently?"

He nods reluctantly.

"Midoriya!"

"Can we just not talk about it please?" His words are muffled by his hands.

"No. No, listen to me. You're worried. That's fine. That's normal. But, you'll do fine tomorrow, okay? Just… Just study as much as you can, go to bed at a decent time, and… and no more vigilantism until you're done with exams!"

The boy falls further into himself, reluctantly nodding.

Reo waits for a moment before taking a gentle seat beside his friend, resting a hand on his back. "You're a smart guy Midoriya. You'll do great."

"Just call me Izuku already," the boy mutters, words muffled.

Tsukauchi laughs. "Zuku it is then."

Midoriya huffs his own laugh, nudging the other with an elbow. "Don't push it *ReRe* ."

Midoriya feels numb going to school that morning. His attention waxes and wanes as the hours progress. He can only pick at his lunch and completely skips out on fifth period in favor of sitting on the roof

and wallowing in his thoughts.

"Do you really trust that letter?" the voice in his head hisses. *"Encouraging you to apply for another department? Take the hint* ***Deku*** *they don't want a quirkless nobody like you at their school."* It laughs, Cheshire grin glinting. *"Scores don't matter. It's all about* ***reputation*** *and face it. Midoriya Izuku has none."*

The teen sighs, leaning against the railing, staring out over the sea of gray buildings that stretch on for miles. He wishes the voice would disappear.

Wishing never gets him anywhere.

The next day it pours. Outside, the rain comes down in rivulets from the balcony above as Inko hovers around him. She runs back and forth, getting him this and that, fixing his hair, fixing is clothes. She hugs him and kisses him and gently tucks his umbrella into his hands. "You're gonna do great sweety," is what she tells him.

"You'll do awesome!" is what Reo sends.

Midoriya doesn't believe either of them.

Izuku is smart. He knows this. And, after years of training and months of vigilantism, he's strong too. But, none of that changes the fact that Midoriya Izuku is quirkless. *Nothing* will ever change that, not good grades, not good behavior, not good intentions, not empty prayers. He's been rejected from UA once before for his lack of power. His hopes and dreams had been so easily crushed by a few sheets of paper. What was a second time to them?

The rain lightens up to a gentle patter against his umbrella on his way to the train station, but the roaring rain picks up again as soon as he's under cover. It pelts against the train's hull and Midoriya's left to watch the raindrops race each other on the window panes. The second one pulls ahead of the first as the train pulls to a stop. He wonders which one would've won given more time.

The rain continues to pour as Midoriya pauses near the station's exist. He's not prepared to be turned away again. He doesn't know if he'd be able to take it.

"You'll be rejected and it'll break you. You won't be able to handle it. Give up now. Save yourself some pain."

Izuku doesn't think he's ever wanted to listen to the voice so badly in his life.

He doesn't though. He can't.

Rejection is terrifying. But not trying is even more so.

To his right there's a kid who stops beside him, looking out at the falling rain with a grimace. It's obvious that he doesn't have an umbrella.

"Where're you headed?" Midoriya doesn't know what makes him ask the question.

The boy looks over at him in surprise, red eyes curious. "UA."

"Are you taking the gen ed. test too?"

The stranger nods, scratching at the back of his head with a sheepish, shark-toothed smile. "Yeah. I heard the entrance exam for the hero course is brutal and I'm not all that confident in my quirk so I figured I'd apply for both just in case."

Midoriya perks up at the mention of quirks. He latches onto it, uses the idea as a distraction, something to take his mind off of his impending doom. "You don't mind if I ask what kind of quirk you have, do you?"

"Uh sure," the boy scratches at this chin, "I can harden my skin, but nothin' more than that."

Midoriya nods along with him, a smile inching across his lips as he pulls himself further and further out of the darkness the fifteen-year-old had been cast himself into. "You say that like it's nothing special but that actually sounds like a really versatile quirk. Definitely great for hero work. Obviously I don't know the ins and outs of it like you do, but something like that is good for both defense and offense. It's probably not as flashy as some of the other stuff out there, but that's not really important." Thunder rumbles gently in the distance. "Plus flashy doesn't always mean user friendly. I know someone who has a really loud and flashy quirk. He can make explosions from his palms and everything and he's been really popular growing up. But now he needs hearing aids because of his quirk. I heard Present Mic had a similar situation too."

The boy frowns. "I can see what you mean."

Midoriya looks over at him, offering the teen a soft smile. “Don’t doubt yourself too much. Just do the best you can and if it still isn’t good enough then all you have to do is get better right?”

The other’s eyes sparkle. “You know, that was really manly right then.”

Izuku grins, the tense line of his shoulders finally gone. “Do you want to walk together? It’d suck to have to take the test with your clothes all drenched.”

His smile is returned. “That’d be awesome! Thanks man!”

Thunder roars overhead and rain patters against the canvas of his umbrella and the pavement and the part of his shoulder he leaves sticking out so the other doesn’t get wet. Conversation is hard with all the noise, but they make due until they take note of UA’s looming form. Dark clouds reflect off of thousands of windows as they approach. It’s an imposing building and the sky’s reflection gives it the vague sense that it stretches on into Heaven.

It almost feels like it’s warding him away, desperately trying to get him to turn back. But, the two strangers march forward, taking shelter beneath Midoriya’s All Might umbrella. He peeks out from underneath its rim to stare up at the rain hazed outline of the school as they pass beneath it’s front arch. He has to push himself not to stop and stare. Examanies eye them as they pass, some running with book bags held over their heads, others calmly walking underneath their own umbrellas.

Their stares seem to ask why he’s here.

He asks himself the same question.

Midoriya and the boy, Kirishima Eijirou, part ways once they get inside the building, both assigned to different testing rooms. Their separation feels like another nail in his coffin, another silent message that he doesn’t belong here.

He’s sent to a room with thirty-five other test takers. It’s cramped. They don’t have any business all being shoved into a room together for who knows how long. Midoriya wonders how many more rooms there are like this one.

There's a quiet thrum of activity around him. A girl next to him mutters quietly to herself, reciting material as a boy with a mutant in front of him viciously taps his pencil into the edge of his desk. Midoriya's own leg bounces anxiously.

How many people get into general education each year? There's forty admitted to the hero course. But what about the rest? He can't remember. His leg bounces faster.

"What does it matter?" the voice hisses. *"You won't make it in. Passing isn't enough . "*

And Midoriya knows that the voice is correct, knows that passing one test won't be enough to grant him his dream. His hard work has never made a difference before. Why would it start now?

His other leg begins bouncing in tandem, matching the other's quickening pace.

His hope dwindles. Then the hero Snipe walks in to begin the examination and his stomach sinks. Midoriya feels the tug of phantom cuffs against his wrists.

Now more than ever the boy gets the feeling of estrangement. He's a vigilante in a den of heroes trying to play at being what they've been since birth. He's spent all his time trying to squeeze himself into the roles that the people here were *made* to fill.

He is an outcast here. The words 'quirkless', 'powerless', 'weak' invade his senses. They taste sour, smell rotten. They sound like a broken piano. The strings unravel, snapping with the force of cracking whips.

The tests are passed out.

Midoriya wants the earth to swallow him up.

The exam is long and tedious. If anything, Midoriya is smart, but he often finds himself second guessing his answers out of fear. This test alone might not be enough to get him into UA, but it's his only shot. He has no other choice. This test is his last hope, his only hope.

"You'll fail," the voice hisses.

Midoriya refuses to.

He can't afford to.

There's a short break sometime during testing. It allows participants enough time to use the bathroom, eat a snack, drink a drink. Midoriya doesn't think he could eat anything even if he wanted to. He does take small sips of his water though. It gives him something to do, something to focus on.

Outside the rain continues. It'd make him drowsy if not for the nervous energy flooding his system. To his left a girl quietly makes her way through a small bag of pretzels, to his right two students murmur in hushed voices.

"I heard their quirk is mind control!" Midoriya tunes into their idle conversation. Head turning slightly when he hears the word 'quirk' thrown out.

"It's just for rats though." He pauses, catching the one who'd made the comment donning a mischievous grin from the corner of his eye.

His friend lets out a low whine. "No dude! I'm being serious here! Everyone is always talking about how they've never seen them use a quirk. But, what if it's because they couldn't remember! Like, it makes so much sense! Think about it!"

"Listen, it's literally in his name. The og story of Pied Piper had him controlling rats right? *You* think about it."

Midoriya freezes, tensing up in his seat. *They're talking about me.*

The voice in his head rears its head. *"But they're not."* Its maw creaks open. *"No one cares about **you** . All they care about is **Piper** ."*

Midoriya scowls. His reply of, *I am Piper,* is an obvious one.

"But are you really?" it questions. " *Piper's more than just a person, don't you think? A quirkless Deku like yourself couldn't live up to the expectations behind something like that. The moment they know **you** you'll be discarded like the trash you are."* Its laugh pounds against his skull, headache threatening to rise. It's teeth glint from the shadows, warding away anyone foolish enough to dispute its words.

The two boys continue chattering, the girl continues eating pretzels, Midoriya Izuku continues to be consumed by his own mind.

The test continues.

Midoriya feels like he's drowning.

It takes another few hours to complete the exam, though he's sure he spent an hour alone just checking his answers.

Midoriya is a smart kid, but still he worries. And still he lets his thoughts consume him. And still the rain pours outside.

He leaves his umbrella for the other boy to have, Kirishima he reminds himself. He hands it to one of the people that had assigned them room numbers and tells them what the boy looks like, tells them how hard he'll be to miss.

Midoriya lets the rain soak his clothes and weigh down his hair. He lets it splatter across his cheeks like extra freckles and stain his skin with the cold. It's a chilling, February rain and by the time he makes it to the station he's shivering.

A puddle forms at his feet on the train. He feels guilty about it. The rain drops race each other on the window and he watches to see which one will win. The one in first joins others, it grows larger, races faster. It leads the entire time. His doesn't make it to the finish line by the time his stop arrives.

It's still raining. He's still cold. Life goes on.

(Midoriya doesn't know if he wants it to anymore.)

Inko isn't there when he gets home. He gets a few messages from her and Reo though, both of them asking how he thinks it went. He can't find it in himself to answer just yet.

His socks leave a trail of watery footprints on the floor as he makes his way to the bathroom. He steps into the shower still fully clothed. He can't be bothered to peel anything off while they're still soaked with late February rain. The shower weighs them down further, but it's warm and it's comforting and it almost feels like a hug if he closes his eyes long enough.

But it's also suffocating. They're too heavy, too close. He tries to tug his hoodie off, but it sticks to his skin, drags against his arms. It catches on his chin and pulls at his hair as he finally peels it off. The

water is suddenly too hot on his skin and he stumbles out of the shower, socks sopping and already half falling off. He takes in a gasping breath, hair forming rivulets of water down his cheeks. They drip off the edge of his chin as he stumbles towards the sink, grabbing onto the lip of the counter.

He swipes wildly at the mirror, revealing his reflection through the gathering steam.

His face is distorted in places where water continues to cling to its surface and he can only watch himself as he pants. He ducks his head, not wanting to see the fear in his eyes.

The mirror fogs back over, hiding his face and his scars and his turmoil. The shower's still on, the steady thrumming of water falling invading his head like white noise. Midoriya sinks down into a crouch, hands still gripping the edge of the counter. He releases a shaking breath.

His sun shudders, gaseous flames flickering in and out like the breaths he's forcing himself to take. His legs are shaking, knuckles white. He feels lightheaded.

"You're not a hero." His scars ache. *"You're barely a human being."* He remembers coming undone, remembers being pieced back together at the hands of a masked man. *"I know who you are. You are useless, quirkless,* ***powerless*** *"*

He clamps his hands over his ears and yells. He can't be bothered to worry about the neighbors and what they'll think or what they'll whisper about when he passes them in the halls. He doesn't care, *can't* care. He just wants to drown it out. His cheeks are wet but he can't tell if it's from the shower or his tears. He just wants it to stop, wants it to shut up.

(He can't shut it up.)

"So, do the world a favor, won't you? And— take a swan dive off the roof."

Outside it continues to rain.

Inside the shower continues to run.

The white noise isn't enough to cover up the voice.

Nothing is enough.

(*He's* not enough.)

Chapter End Notes

AH!!!!!!! IT FEELS SO GOOD TO FINALLY POST AGAIN!!!! I told myself I was gonna write a lot during break but we all see how that went and now I start back the 13th and KDSFJHASJKDFASKFLADS Either way! I hope everyone enjoyed the chapter, lots of angst this time round, BUUUUUUUT IT'S UA. 24 Chapters in KJAFKSLDJFASDFLKADFJ I feel like I was planning on doing this sooner, most of the first chapters I wrote for this fic were actually UA related scenes ADKSFJSDLKFADF There's gonna be a lot happening soon! I hope you'll sick around to enjoy it (and cry >:))!!

Remember to message me on one of my social medias if you'd like to join the discord server! We've had quite a few new people join since last chapter which is really exciting it's really 24/7 chaos over there alskjflksdfj!! Anyway I'd love to be able to get to know all of you so hopefully I'll see some of you there!! 😎😁

Solar Winds

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It's hard to pull himself back together, but he does. It's ugly and messy but he wipes his tears, sleeps for ten hours, and goes right back to doing what he's always done. But the thoughts still linger like cigarette smoke.

He tries to convince himself that they don't. He's only somewhat successful.

"Seems like you're getting back into the swing of things, Hirano," Midoriya breathes.

"Or maybe you're just getting slow." She throws a punch at his side that he dodges, using the opportunity to grab her wrist and pull her down to the mat.

"Slow huh?" he huffs. "If I can beat you being as slow as I am what does that mean for all those competitors you've beaten over the years?"

The dojo is a good distraction for him. It's somewhere where wandering thoughts are hazardous and in turn force him to stay focused.

Hirano laughs. *It's good to hear her laugh,* he thinks, helping her stand. *It looks like she's doing a lot better.*

"I'd tell you to enter some and find out but I know you won't."

"You're right." He smiles. It's small and doesn't look as sincere as it use to be.

By all standards Midoriya's day is going fine. Classes weren't any worse than usual, *Bakugou wasn't any worse than usual.* And their sparring lessons weren't any different from any other day. But there's a shadow of… *something* that's been following him for days now and everyone can see it.

The two take a break from sparring at a word from Ji-woo and take a seat on one of the benches near the front. They both slowly sip at their

waters, watching as a younger group runs through some basic moves with Chee Sensei.

It's a comfortable silence but it ends after a minute or two when Hirano begins speaking again. "I was talking to Gamon about some of the stuff that I missed while I was gone. I heard the police showed up asking about that vigilante." Beside her the boy tenses. "You know, the one with the worm quirk?"

Midoriya splutters, choking on his drink. *"The what?* " he wheezes out, head whipping towards his companion.

She takes another sip of her water. "Pied Piper? I think that was their name."

"Where on *Earth* did you hear that he had a *worm quirk* of all things," the boy asks, completely bewildered.

Hirano glances at him. "One of my friends from school?"

Izuku stares at her for a long moment before he laughs. At first it's a small one, his disbelief obvious. But then he *really* laughs. It's bright and shining and oh so contagious. Hirano looks on in surprise but can't help a smile of her own from pulling at her lips.

It's good to hear him laugh, she thinks.

"Come on~" she whines, elbowing him gently, "I was being serious. I heard you and Gamon got the heat of it, sorry about that."

Midoriya waves her off. "What're you apologizing for? It's not like it's your fault."

But it is, Izuku's brain reminds him.

"No, I… I had a run in with Piper a little while before I came back here. He used Muay Thai and I… uh, might've told the police about it," she laughs.

Midoriya feels a mock sense of betrayal at the news. He'd known it'd have to have been either her or Tanaka to set the police so close to him.

"I had just started at my new high school and got in with the wrong crowd." She scratches at the back of her head shyly. "You remember Tanaka Hato right?"

“I don’t think I could forget that guy if I wanted to,” Midoriya huffs.

“Yeah, well turns out we ended up going to the same school. I didn’t know anyone else so…” she trails off.

And Midoriya understands without her saying anything more, not because he’d been there during her run in with Piper, but because of his experience being the quirkless loser. Being alone is… hard, to say the least.

“We ended up getting arrested,” she says, huffing a laugh, “don’t tell anyone else though.”

Midoriya tries his best to act surprised, brows rising as he glances at her. He takes another sip of water in a silent signal for her to keep talking.

“Tanaka and some of two of the others disappeared from school after that. I don’t know if they dropped out or what, but I was the biggest voice of reason in that group and…” she trails off, watching as Chee Sensei works her way through the ranks of new students, correcting stances as she goes. “I’m worried that they’ll get themselves into something they can’t get out of.”

ishiseiun

[Image: blurry snapshot of Pied Piper’s back as he runs, a small bag of some sort in his hand]

Liked by **gazzzy** and 8,098 others

ishiseiun I just saw Piper!!! He was kind of possibly in the middle of running from the police??? so we didn’t get to talk but watching like three cops trying to sprint after him was really funny dhdvdvgdhfvb I haven’t heard anything about him getting caught so I hope he got away, anyway stan #PiedPiper thanks for coming to my ted talk #vigilante #vigilantes #CantBelieveISawHim

view all 142 comments

digital-mayhem fjfhgcjfj do you know why he was running from the police this time?????

ishiseiun @digital-mayhem Probably for something illegal dvdshfjhdvfd

digital-mayhem @ishiseiun DCDGHFB IM BACK BECAUSE I JUST SAW ONLINE THAT HE WAS RUNNING FROM THE POLICE BECAUSE THEY SAW HIM ORDERING FOOD FROM THE MCDONALDS DRIVE THRU ON FOOT ALSJJSHSKSNS IM GOING FERAL

ishiseiun @digital-mayhem WAS THAT THE BAG I SAW HIM CARRYING??? I CANT IM CRYIBG DVDVDCHFVYD

the-database-says @ishiseiun i see

ishiseiun @the-database-says ???? See what????

the-database-says @ishiseiun all

m1ruko_love BRO I CANT BELIVE YOU MET PIPER IM SO JEALOUS

ishiseiun @m1ruko_love DAJFSKLASDF IM JEALOUS OF ME TOO

vigilante_newscape Hello! Would it be okay if we dmed you about being able to use this image for one of our stories? We would make sure that you're credited.

ishiseiun @vigilante_newscape sure?????

The only thing Reo's capable of doing as Midoriya crawls through his bedroom window is cackle. The vigilante chunks the fast food bag at the older teen who fumbles it as Izuku collapses against the wall, gently sliding to the floor.

"I guess you've heard then."

Reo's laughter turns into silent wheezing. He doubles over, supporting himself with his desk.

"I'm never getting you food again."

Reo sinks into a crouch, hand covering his mouth to muffle anything that might come out.

Midoriya shifts, moving to sprawl out completely on the floor. “I haven’t run that fast in a long time,” he sighs, eyeing his friend as he continues to choke back his laughter, slowly regaining his composure.

“I’m sorry,” he chokes out breathlessly. “I was hungry and needed some time to finish everything. I didn’t think you’d take *two hours* to get a burger and fries!” He breaks into a fresh peels of laughter, shoulders shaking as he muffles more bright laughter.

“You know what, I’m not sorry your food is cold. Enjoy your soggy fries.”

“Jokes on you I *love* soggy fries.”

Midoriya snorts, “Of course you would.”

Reo grins back at him. “You’re upset with me now but I wonder how long that’ll last.” Tsukauchi pushes himself back up, tossing the bag of food to the side for the moment. Midoriya lifts his head, craning to see what the other is doing from his spot on the floor. “It took longer than I thought, and really it’s still not done,” he murmurs. “A few of the designs didn’t work and I kind of ran out of materials for a while. It’s probably a bit too eye catching for your style at the moment but I figured I’d get your opinion before I did anything else.”

Midoriya’s almost immediately up on his feet, vying to see what Reo has in store.

His brain registers almost immediately that it’s a mask, a half mask like the ones he wears now. It comes only high enough to protect the bridge of his nose before slopping right back down to create a 3-D diamond shape that juts down towards his chin and flairs out towards his cheeks. There are four slits carved into the central piece, all filled in with a speaker like wire mesh. The sides taper out to either side, curving around where his cheeks would go. Two small knob-like dials stick out on either side.

It’s all buffed, metallic grays and silvers and Midoriya can’t take his eyes off it.

“I didn’t know what color scheme you wanted to stick with so I left it bare for now, which is why I said it’s not finished. But, w—”

“It’s perfect,” Izuku cuts in, eyes alight.

Reo turns to see the valiant flicker of life backlighting his friend’s pied

eyes. He smiles at the sight of it.

Midoriya's eyes crinkle at the corners with the growth of his smile. He excitedly looks up at Reo. "Can I try it on?"

The older boy laughs quietly, gently handing it to him. "The back strap stretches so you can slip it on and off easy enough but I made sure it wouldn't slip off mid-fight or anything.

"I'd love to see how you tested that," the boy laughs, slipping it on over his head.

"The knobs on the sides are for the voice modulator, it's built in this time by the way. The Right side controls the voice setting and the left just turns it on or off."

"Voice setting implies that there's more than one," Midoriya's voice come out muffled before he switches it on. "Soo WhAAAAAt aRe ThhhEE SettinGSSS."

There's a moment of silence before all chaos ensues. There's sudden burst of loud, auto-tuned laughter as Midoriya doubles over, the older teen trying to shush him but unable to let out a sound past his own bubbling laugh. He waves his free hand wildly instead, trying to get Izuku to stop before Misaki wakes up to it. Reo stumbles over, pressing his hands against the speaker to dampen the sound. It does little to stop the ungovernable, auto-tuned laughter and only serves to further fuel the chaos.

Their laughter continues for another few minutes until Reo's finally able to switch the mask to a more normal voice setting. Midoriya's voice gets deeper. "I added a few extra choices this time, I kept the multi-voice, and the auto-tune," Reo explains, chuckling. But the two new settings can make you sound more masculine or feminine depending on which you use. I thought it might be good for baiting people."

Izuku grins beneath the mask. He clears his throat, taking up a dramatic fighting pose. "Omae wa mou, *shindeiru."*

They both start laughing again.

Midoriya doesn't stick around long after he and Reo finish going through all of the different settings the new mask has, testing them all

out to make sure they work the way they're supposed to. *"I made them all with your voice in mind, but I only tested it on myself so I was worried the masc and fem settings wouldn't sound as natural as I wanted, but they seem to work well,"* Reo's voice echoes in his head.

He feels exhausted, but he's excited to test out the mask sometime soon.

He jogs through the nearby park, a skip in his step. The tree tops roar above him, bending with the wind. There's a threat of storms in the distance, an excitement in the air that sets his heart racing. It makes him giddy even though he knows it shouldn't. The wind billows, clothes whipping around him. His hood is tossed back, a speckling of rain dusting his cheeks and his hair and it feels so *good.* The rain on his skin and the wetness on his cheeks. He revels in it.

Lightning flashes in the clouds and he knows he shouldn't be out. It's late and he should already be home and in bed but *the storm.* It rolls over his head, clouds dusted with an orange-brown glow from the city lights.

It rains harder and he laughs.

Laughs as it pelts his skin and drenched his clothes and as the wind tears at his shamrock curls, dyed black from the rain.

And maybe he'll regret it all in the morning. Maybe he won't.

He pulls his hood back up before continuing through the park, following the winding path past a small pond. The incoming rain makes it harder to see, but he presses on, unbothered, excited. There's more lightning overhead, more thunder, more laughter.

For once he doesn't think to remember his anxiety over the upcoming exam results. He stands in the here and now. And the here and now tells him that he's already saving people, with or without anyone else's approval.

Turns out he does regret it in the morning. Climbing back up to their balcony had been a precarious ordeal and all his time out in the rain had left him with a fever that kept him from going on his nightly vigilante runs in the days following.

Midoriya pants, plopping himself down after an intense match against

Gamon. There's an odd sense of deja vu that Midoriya gets when sits himself down next to Hirano. It's been nearly a week since their last conversation here. There's a large bruise beginning to form on her arm where she barely managed to block one of Gamon's kicks.

"Looks painful," he tells her, nodding towards the darkening patch of skin.

She looks up surprised, her brown eyes a little duller than he remembers. "It's my fault. I've been a little out of it today."

There's a moment of silence.

"Anything I can do?"

She initially shakes her head but pauses, thinking. Hirano heaves a sigh. "I ran into Tanaka," she mutters quietly, fiddling with the water bottle in her hands. "He was basically living out of this twenty-four hour internet café by the arcade… he did drop out evidently."

Midoriya doesn't know how to respond to the news, he feels an ache of guilt and pity swirling in his chest. Tanaka's actions are his own, but Midoriya is the one who handed him over to the police. He feels partially at fault for the outcome of Tanaka's tale, even if reality knows better.

"He says its the best decision he ever made," Hirano says weakly.

Midoriya knows from personal experience that Tanaka Hato is far from the best person on earth, he's not someone people *worry for.* But, he can still see the anxiety roiling in Hirano's eyes. "I'm sure there'll be someone to make sure he doesn't get into too much trouble," he tells her, but the words sound hollow even in his own ears.

"What?" She huffs out a sad laugh, "Like the police? The heroes? That's what I'm hoping he'll *avoid."*

"Midoriya, Hirano, back on your feet," Chee Sensei calls, cutting their conversation off, "I want you to help me demonstrate something for the newcomers."

Training is long and hard and leaves him more winded than it probably should. Midoriya blames it on the after effects of his illness. He lets out a quiet cough as Midoriya stops by their mailbox on the

way up to their apartment. The boy had changed a lot in the last ten months, but his mother's habits hadn't. A soft smile pushes against his lip, gentle in every sense of the word. He shuffles through the bills, pausing at an advertisement for a new pizza place with the intention of telling Inko about it later.

It only takes the sight of one envelope for everything to crumble.

It's another letter. The sight of it alone is enough to make him nauseous. It's addressed in the exact same way, printed in the exact same font.

He feels like he's going to throw up.

He doesn't.

Midoriya picks it up carefully, hands shaking. Gravity weighs him down, black hole threatening to splutter into existence in the center of his chest and take with it the last of his sanity. A fifteen-year-old can only take so much after all.

He reads the return address at least three different times. *Has it been a week already?*

"The results are in," the voice hisses, tar-black maw wrenching open, *"The quirkless will never be allowed to set foot in those halls."*

He hadn't been back to the beach in ten months, but, as it is, that's where his feet drag him again after he stows the rest of their mail back in the box for safe keeping. His legs tremble as his walk turns into a jog and his jog turns into a run.

The beach has changed since he's been here last. There's obviously more trash now, nearly twice of what there used to be. He ignores it, panting and heaving, heart racing faster than it should as he carefully picking his way through. The small clearing he used to train in is completely filled now, whether from a cave in or new garbage he isn't sure. He doesn't care. He can't bring himself to care.

He finds a small space in the middle of it all and carefully on the edge of a busted refrigerator. He stares at the envelope disparagingly.

This will be the end of him.

The final nail in his coffin.

What'll he do if he's rejected again? Could he bring himself to continue being Piper?

The sun hasn't fully set yet and it paints the surrounding trash in different shades of burnished golds.

"Failure has only ever been your future's outcome. You won't become a hero. You never had a chance."

And Midoriya knows that. He's *known* that. He's been told the same thing his entire life. He's quirkless. He can't become a hero.

(Recently he's begun to believe it.)

He doesn't want to believe it.

Midoriya plucks at the corner of the envelope. Waiting won't change it's outcome. *Like a bandaid,* he tells himself.

It'll still hurt.

Will it hurt worse than failing her?

Possibly.

He gently tears the envelope open. (He's too scared to rip it like a bandaid.)

He unfolds the letter, reading it in the dying light. His hands shake, eyes straining to find that one particular word that had ruined his dreams ten months ago. He searches for 'regret'.

Then he searches again.

And again.

Midoriya slips off the edge of his seat, knees buckle beneath him, the sand softening his fall.

He strains his eyes harder, gaze jumping back to the top to start from the beginning, hoping, *praying.*

Dear Midoriya Izuku,

We are writing to congratulate you on placing 5th in this years General

Education exam. UA welcomes you to join this years class 1-C—

Midoriya's eyes blur with tears, unable to read any further. They fall, wetting the paper and muddying the ink but he can't care.

The sun in his chest flares, flames licking up the sides of his rib cage. For once they don't burn. They tickle.

A broken laugh escapes him. Then a sob.

This was his chance.

This was the only chance he'd be allowed. But it was enough for him. All he'd ever asked for was a chance and UA had finally given him one. He'd make sure not to waste it.

A vigilante in a den of heroes.

He almost feels undeserving of the chance. *Almost.*

There's a grin that splits his face, wide and blinding. He continues to cry.

It feels good to cry.

He stumbles away from the beach, running all the way home and busting through the door. Inko looks startled at his entrance, but he tells her he's been accepted and breaks into fresh sobs and they cry together, all tears, and snot, and warbled laughter.

It's *UA.* It's his *dream* school. He's been adamant on attending ever since he found out it was All Might's alma mater. He's near euphoric for all of four hours before it hits him that he's going into the *general education* course and has a less than one percent chance of ever seeing the insides of one of the heroics classrooms. It cuts through all of his excitement like Bakugou's quirk cuts through silence.

They make katsudon and celebrate but the revelation taints his enjoyment. He thinks he hides it well enough from his mother. At the very least she doesn't act anything other than happy about the whole event. "I have such a smart kid!" She brags.

Usually similar comments would have him flushing and ventemly denying any such thing. Now he only offers her a strained smile that he prays she doesn't look too closely at.

“We’ve hit a dead end with Piper,” Sansa reports, gently settling a stack of files on the detective’s desk.

“That’s nothing new,” Naomasa mutters dispondantly.

“You interviewed all of the potential suspects we had and we doubled checked the alibis of everyone that we could, but we didn’t manage to find anything.”

The detective runs a hand over his face, leaning carefully back against the break room counter. He takes a sip of the bitter office coffee, grimacing. “I really don’t know what to do at this point Sansa. We’re out of leads and anytime we get close to catching him he slips away.” Tsukauchi sighs. “I guess I’ll send out more notices to the local hero agencies. That boy has encountered both of the top two heroes at this point and neither of them recognized him. Which is no fault of theirs, they’re both busy men, but it’s frustrating nonetheless. Either of them could’ve easily captured Piper had they known to.”

Tamakawa nods along grimly, the bell at his throat tinkling gently. The feline’s ears flicker as a female officer stumbles into the breakroom.

She looks up at the detective with wide eyes. “We have Pied Piper in custody.”

Chapter Art:

Piper’s new mask!

The letter!!

Chapter End Notes

> no i will not apologize for that ending, but also blame Avery because they thought it'd be a perfect ending uwu i obviously agreed aksdjfladskfj
> its been awhile since i last posted, classes started back and i started an internship so everything's been kinda hectic but otherwise im doing good! the Piper Discord is thriving AND WE HAVE AN OFFICIAL PIPER TUMBLR @/askpiedpiper ! like i've mentioned before if anyone would like to join the server please dm me on one of my social media accounts or send it to the new tumblr! I'm excited for what's next and I hope you all are as well!

Until next time! (sorry if this seems rushed im actually at my internship and supposed to be working on promotional stuffaksjdhfaskldjf)

Collapsar

Chapter Notes

TW://

Mentions of suicide; blood and violence

See the end of the chapter for more notes

[I forgot to post all the fanart on the last chapter so I'm doing it now! I hope I didn't forget any! Please let me know if I did T_T]

Mine ;)

Goose x

Dippy

dabbing_apple

Queenie x x

Pitoumugis

BlueLiac

Moonpaw (I cant actually remember if I've linked this before but either way they deserve it dgdgdvfv)

Midoriya curses, pied eyes blown wide with terror, his heart in his throat, burning there like acid. He can feel something wet trickling down his temple.

His head *hurts*.

Police sirens whine around him, ringing in his ears.

He tries to swallow his fear. He chokes on it instead.

Hours Earlier:

Dinner with his mother had drained him more than he thinks it

probably should have.

The words *'general education'* had been on loop in his head the entire night, whispered to him over and over again like a curse. Everytime his mother had mentioned UA with those excited jade eyes of hers it had sent a spike of pain through his chest. Because yes, he was going to UA, but it was class 1-C, it was *general education* and *general education* wouldn't get him any closer to being a hero. It'd be no different from going to any other public school except that his dreams would be so tantalizingly close and yet farther than ever before.

It was a chance for him, but it was a far cry from the chance he *needed.* He'd made it into the stadium but would never be allowed to play on the field.

Midoriya struggles to fall asleep that night, tossing and turning in bed, unable to rest. He finds himself an hour shy of his nightly vigilantism hours having only slept for what feels like twenty minutes. He feels so tired, but his mind *won't shut up.* It continuously turns over the words *general education* over and over, again and again.

He drags himself out of bed early, listening to see in Inko is still awake. He slips out of his room, pressing his ear to the door to her room, holding his own breath to listen for her quiet snores.

She's asleep.

Izuku slinks back to his room.

He'd been accepted into UA, but at the same time he hadn't. The need to prove himself was rising, the desire to save people suffocating. The need to push himself to go farther, faster, to overtake those running run ahead of him quickly became an all consuming one.

But, the thing about running so fast so quickly is that one often runs with blinders on.

Midoriya Izuku is no different. Albeit he's certainly more careful that your average runner his age, he's not immune to his emotions. So, his blinders go up as he adjusts Reo's burgundy utility belt around his waist, patting around the sides to check for his tonfa and his growing variety of non lethal grenades. He slips his contact in, dons his new mask and slips down their balcony. His blinders darken as he takes off, searching, *searching,* for people to save, more criminals to defeat. More, more, *more.*

It consumes him like a disease, driving him farther, past the limits he usually stops at. All of the lines he has set for himself dissolve before him and he passes over them with no hesitation.

His mind *writhes.*

Prove yourself.

Prove yourself.

Prove them wrong.

So he does… until he doesn't.

He strays out of his territory, he runs too far, he flies to close to the sun.

Somewhere, in a precinct nearby, a bell tinkles. Officer Tamakawa nods along grimly with Naomasa's words. The feline's ears flicker as a female officer stumbles into the breakroom they're standing in, all attention cast onto her.

She's flushed, breathing labored, eyes wide. She stares up at the detective beside him and pants out the words they'd been so desperate to hear for almost a year now. "We have Pied Piper in custody."

Neither of them move for a moment, confusion and disbelief mingling in their chests. Naomasa is the first to move, taking a small step forward as if he's unsure of what to do. *Piper is in custody.* What are they supposed to do with those words?

Neither of them have an answer for that question and so Naomasa takes another step forward. His dark eyes dart towards the female officer again. "The Pied Piper?" He asks.

She nods.

Still neither of them know what to do.

Pied Piper is in custody.

Pied Piper is pinned to the ground by a hero with a mutant quirk. He's a towering man with a set of extra arms sprouting from his ribcage and spikes trailing down his spine.

Midoriya squirms. His wrists are bound together with quirk suppressant cuffs and though there's no quirk to suppress they still keep him restrained, *trapped.* The vigilante's pulse quickens further. He feels like he can't breathe.

There's a crowd of people in a loose perimeter around them, mostly civilians, and there's a police car to his left that he can see if he strains his head. There's one officer that sits inside it, door open and eyes tracking him from the passenger seat as they call for backup. The other one attempts to keep the crowd at bay.

Midoriya slams his heels fruitlessly into the hero's back.

"Stop moving," he growls.

"That's Pied Piper right?"

"I wish I could help him."

"That take down was so cool!"

"Acro such an awesome hero!"

"What was that dude even doing?"

"Are you recording this?"

"Isn't that that one vigilante? Did he get a new mask?"

The mutterings of the crowd carries as another police cruiser arrives on scene. The hero drags him up painfully, wrenching his shoulders in their sockets.

"Stand up."

The fifteen-year-old struggles to get his feet beneath him as the hero drags him towards the first car. He keeps his head down, out of sight of any spying cameras. His identity feels like the only thing he has left.

His staff is in the middle of the street where he'd been tackled and a grenade or two that had fallen out during his struggle, but both his tonfa are still strapped at his hips.

Think Izuku. Think!

He thinks he's about to throw up.

Think!

The boy stares down at his feet, eyes filled with an all encompassing terror as the hero continues shoving him forward. His eyes catch on a glint of metal and the shine of spikes.

I don't want to.

Not doing so could mean the end of everything.

I don't want to.

Hesitating will cost you your future.

Midoriya's heart thunders in his chest, sun flickering with indecision.

But he's out of time to hesitate any longer.

The vigilante twists his right leg around, wrapping it awkwardly behind the hero's leg before slamming the spiked tips of his boots into the man's foreleg. There's a grunt of pain from behind him and he feels the the hero's knee buckle slightly.

"Villain."

No.

"What? Do you think you're a hero?" The words bubble up like boiled tar in his cerebrum, coating every crevice in pitch. *"You have to reside within the law to be a hero,* ***boy****."*

Midoriya just needed to get his mind off of *general education.* He had followed the signs of life, searching for more and more people to save, searching for more and more ways to prove himself. He needed to prove himself. He *had* to prove himself.

Midoriya grimaces, dragging the spikes through the meat of the hero's leg hoping to loosen the hero's grip on his wrists, but they only tighten.

The crowd gets louder and the officer in the car he's being led to stands at the commotion. He rips the spikes out and brings his foot back towards himself before slamming his foot down, digging the spikes into the top of the hero's foot. The shoes are thin, weak on top.

Mutant types usually put too much faith in their quirks.

Another police car arrives on scene, lights flashing, sirens blaring. They hurt his ears.

The hero lets out a strangled noise, grip finally loosening. The vigilante takes his chance, throwing his head back and butting the man in the chin. He's finally able to rip his hands away before taking off. There's shouting behind him and the crowd roars and shrieks and cheers. Someone slips out of the crowd, a teenager who makes for the vigilante's staff. She picks it up and Piper's ready to sweep past her before she holds it out to him with wide eyes. She slips it between his bound hands, muttering a barely audible, "Go" before disappearing again.

He hears car doors slam and a shouted, exclamation of, "Piper!"

Midoriya's head jerks back at the familiarity of the voice, fearful eyes snapping towards none other than Tsukauchi Naomasa's. He's running towards the boy, a feline officer on his heels. The vigilante hesitates only a moment longer before taking off again.

The crowd breaks before him, parting like ocean waters. Three officers are on his heels. He can hear Detective Tsukauchi shouting for him to stop. "We can talk this out, Piper!"

He doesn't stop.

His staff rests awkwardly in his hands, but he doesn't dare try to shift his grip. One civilian tries tripping him on his way into a nearby alley, sticking out a foot that he easily dodges, behind him it sends one of the officers stumbling.

There are cheers for Piper, and a quiet chant of his name goes up as he slips down an alley. He doesn't know this part of town well, he doesn't even know if he's headed towards home. He can't stop to check.

"I need all available units to the third district! Block 17 Eastbound going 20! We're in pursuit of vigilante Pied Piper! Send in any available heroes!"

There are more shouts.

"Piper! Stop running!"

Like that has ever stopped him before.

The fear is eating him alive, but he has to focus, he has to lose the police. He breaks out onto another street, there are less people but he can hear more sirens and knows that there's a possibility of more heroes showing up soon.

His lungs burn as he throws himself across the street, dodging a few people on the sidewalk and swerving around an incoming car whose driver blares its horn at him. His feet pound relentlessly into the asphalt, heart hammering out an erratic beat. His lungs burn, shoulders ache, legs scream.

He makes himself run faster.

Midoriya throws himself around another street corner.

"Piper's changed directions! Headed North!"

He takes all of two steps around the corner before his momentum screeches to a halt, a large hand grabbing at his forearm, the sudden stop nearly wrenching his shoulder out of socket as the person jerks him around and pins him to the front of a massive chest. It only takes the sight of a gaudy caution tape belt to let Midoriya know exactly who it is he's dealing with. Leave it to the first hero he ever encountered as a vigilante to try and be his last.

There's a quiet rage building up inside him at the thought. His heart shudders, black hole tempting its own creation, calling for him, begging the boy to just give in and let gravity crush him, consume him. His anger gathers, drawing in his emotions like a magnet does metal, like a black hole does everything around it.

"Villain."

The boy snarls, the sound distorted by his mask, echoing the voices of several.

"Villain."

His eyes are wide, pupils dilated with terror and anger and *why won't they leave him alone*. The noise startles the hero, but he doesn't loosen his grip as he crosses both arms around the vigilante's back like a bear hug that threatens to crush the air from his lungs.

"Villain!"

He can hear the others drawing closer. The vigilante can't let himself

hesitate. Midoriya thinks that his actions are easier to carry out given his history with the hero. He slams the spikes of his boots into the man's shin.

Death Arm's hero uniform offers little resistance.

Midoriya slams him foot down with the move, putting his weight into the action, drawing blood and gouging flesh before Death Arms finally releases him, putting a good distance between them. He keeps his fists raised in a defensive position, grimacing in pain.

The vigilante is crouched low now. His hands are still cuffed but it does nothing to make the look in his pied eyes any less terrifying.

A police car screeches to a halt to their right and Midoriya takes off again before anyone has a chance to climb out. The hero reacts immediately, swiping out to try and stop him. His fingers brush against the metal of the boy's staff, but does no more than that. The hero pushes through the fire in his leg, pounding his fists together before wrenching a nearby street sign out of the concrete and hurtling it at the fleeing vigilante. There are shouts further down the street as the sign whizzes past his side with a screeching crash as it slides across the asphalt, throwing up sparks. The projectile corrals him away from another crowd gathering along the opposite side of the street.

The police in the car behind him jump out, immediately chasing after the boy. "He's dangerous!" Death Arms calls, taking only a moment to check his wound before following after them at a slower pace.

Midoriya dips down a narrow alley, shoulders scraping the brick walls, costum catching on the rough exteriors of the too-close buildings. But, the narrow alley slows those chasing him as well and he makes it out well before any of the others. He's running blind, but that's all he can do. The street is nearly deserted, what few people who'd been here gathering on the next street over, drawn in by the whine of police sirens and clashing heroes.

Midoriya's gaze catches on a 24 hour convenience store and makes a beeline for it. He needs to hide, needs to get out of sight. He slams into the front door, shoving it open with his shoulder, pipe clanking against the door frame as he rushes in, ducking out of sight of the windows.

He skids across the floor, slipping between one of the isles. He can hear more shouting outside, more sirens, all muffled now.

The vigilante looks up from his spot, crouched on the floor to see a cashier gapping at him, mouth open, eyes wide.

Midoriya wonders if he looks like a wild animal.

“You’re… You're Piper.”

The vigilante freezes, waiting for the cashier to make a move, to run for the door, to reach for a phone, a weapon, his quirk. He does none of these things.

“What’s your name?” Midoriya pants out quietly, testing the waters. He feels like collapsing but he can’t, not until he knows the man won’t pull anything that could land the vigilante back in police custody.

“W-Wow, uh I’m… I’m Gort, uh Mr. uh P-Pied Piper sir.”

The boy eyes him cautiously, heart still working overtime. Surprisingly the stranger doesn’t look scared of him. He looks in *awe.*

“M-My brother loves you!” Gort’s head turns to follow some action outside the window.

“What’s happening?” Midoriya asks, still positioned to run.

“Uh, some police and a hero just ran by. They looked around real quick before taking off again.”

The vigilante nods before finally relaxing, slowly sinking into a seated position. “If anyone asks questions,” he pants, “Tell them I threatened you. I don’t need you getting in trouble for sheltering me.”

The cashier turns back to him, nodding with wide eyes. “R-right.”

The store descends into something near silence after that. They can still hear distant sirens and the quiet beat of some pop song playing softly from the store’s speakers, but it allows Midoriya to relax.

He peaks open his eyes even though he doesn’t remember closing them and is greeted by blood stains on his boots. The sight startles him, sets his settling heart back into a panic. He’s hurt people before, dislocated shoulders and elbows, broken ribs and hands and arms. He’s knocked teeth out and drawn blood, but it’d always been for the sake of trying protecting others. That’s the only reason the boy has even been able to sleep at night.

But, the blood on his shoes feels selfish. The only person he’d been

trying to protect was himself. He tries to rationalize it in his head. It only works to some extent.

There's a quiet chime that echoes through the store the signals the opening of the front door. The cashier jumps at the noise, turning wide-eyed towards the new customers.

I can't be seen by any more civilians.

"Excuse me," the voice is a recognizable one.

Midoriya scrambles to his feet quietly, creeping further into the store, heart in his throat.

"Have you seen any suspicious persons come in?" Naomasa asks, "They should have been wearing support gear and had their hands cuffed together." The man sounds winded.

Piper hides himself behind the far end of one of the aisles.

The cashier shakes his head. "N-No, Sir."

Lie.

Midoriya curses internally, trying desperately to quiet his breathing.

"Is he still in here?"

The cashier's eyes widen, only able to stutter out some incomprehensible sentence in response.

The detective reaches for his weapon, turning away from the man to carefully scan the aisles behind him. "Piper," he calls, "I know you're in here." He checks behind the counter first before moving to search the rest of the store, weapon carefully aimed at the floor.

"A rather suiting end for you," the voice hisses in his head, *"Trapped like a wild animal in a cage, unable to escape without first biting the hand that only wants to protect you. Will you maim this man too?"* It asks. His cerebrum shivers, wanting so desperately to rid itself of the parasite that it had been invaded by. *"You'd maim him not for your survival, but for your* ***freedom.****"*

But it's not just his freedom on the line. It's everything he's ever worked for, everything everyone always told him he couldn't have, couldn't be. He'd done what they said he couldn't. He got into UA, he protected people, saved people, had become the best hero he could be

despite everything.

All his hard work and tears and blood, all of his pain and all of his suffering would suddenly be *meaningless.* Everyone he knew had quirks, they had wings, and claws, and fangs that they had done nothing to earn. But *Midoriya, he* had to earn *everything* he has now. He filed his nails into claws and teeth into fangs and glued feathers to his back in hopes of achieving his dreams. But, his nails would always be nails and his teeth always teeth and he'd never grow wings of his own. But, he had earned them and if he was caught they would do more than cage him, they would cut off his wings and his claws and they would file his fangs. If he wasn't allowed to save people, to protect people then…

"Do everyone a favor and… take a swan dive off the roof!"

People who can't fly will always fall. That's the rule of gravity, it's cruel in that way.

Everything was on the line.

Everything was at *risk* because of Tsukauchi Naomasa, the uncle and closest thing to a father figure his best friend had.

He creeps towards the front door, moving as quickly as he dares.

He knows there are probably still more heroes and police lurking nearby, but getting out of here is his only chance. He makes eye contact with the cashier one last time as he finally comes within range of the door.

"Piper, don't move."

Midoriya freezes in his steps, the detective positioned directly behind him. He stays still for a moment before slowly pulling himself out of his hunched position, straightening himself.

"I don't want to hurt you," Naomasa says, gradually sliding his weapon back into its holster. A display of good faith. A mistake.

The vigilante bows his head, slowly turning towards the detective.

This could be the end of him, the end of his hopes, his dreams. But, he's not the only person who would be affected by his downfall. This could be the end to every life he might have saved in the future. The reason he hurt people, drew blood, broke bones, all of it was because

of others.

It's selfish, he thinks to himself silently, *that everyone wants me to stop. They shouldn't get to decide the fate of the people they won't save.* He stares the detective down with the same pied eyes he always has, red burning blue and green burning purple against the backs of the Naomasa's eyelids every time he blinks. "What's the harm in saving the people no one else will?"

The detective shakes his head sadly. "There's nothing wrong with that. That's what I'm trying to do too. I'm trying to save *you."*

"In saving me you'll break me," Midoriya echoes lowly. "You'll kill me. Do you realize that?"

The detective raises his hands in a manner that makes the vigilante feel as if he's trying to calm a wild animal. Maybe he is. "They have rehabilitation programs for people like you. You'll be able to save people while on the right side of the law."

"The law be damned," Midoriya spits. There's a moment of silence before the vigilante's voice drops to a murmur, "You're a good man, Detective. But, you're wrong about a lot of things. The law would see that I never become a hero. I can't let you stop me."

Naomasa recognizes the threat, and quickly reaches for the weapon at his hip as Piper charges towards him. He doesn't give the man time to grab his weapon, barreling into him with his shoulder. The detective is too unprepared to do anything but take it.

All the breath is knocked out of him and the cashier makes a choked noise as Izuku tackles the detective to the floor. Naomasa's head hits the tile with a dull crack as they land and the sound of it has the vigilante's stomach turning over.

The fifteen-year-old rolls off the man, struggling to sit himself back up. He spins around to stare at the detective, at Reo's uncle. He's clearly unconscious and Izuku wants to be able to reach around the back of his head and feel for blood, but with his hands bound he has no opportunity to do so.

His head whips towards the cashier, eyes haunted. "Call an ambulance. Tell them exactly what you saw. Make sure he's taken care of."

The man scrambles for the phone, nodding his head mutley, unable to

reply directly.

Izuku disappears quickly after that, guilty conscience and exhaustion weighing him down.

Chapter End Notes

> Soooooooo a lot of you had theories that it was gonna be a copycat but as you can see askfjhajsdklf so rip to all of you DJFAKLDSF Anyways I hope you all enjoyed the chapter! It was really painful to write, but I'm sure that the next one will be worse asdklfhjsldf Thank you all for the continued support and the flood of asks on Tumblr! I'll see you next time! Don't forget to check out the new Piper Tumblr and think about joining the discord!

Dark matter

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

We had a lot of amazing art again!!!!!! I hope I didn't miss anyone!!

Liz x

Polystained

Gaze-bo

nooknooksart

His chest aches gently, eyes heavy, fingers too burdensome to even attempt to lift. They feel dirty, caked with something that he knows doesn't exist. Reo studies them beneath the soft glow of his lamp.

Everything simply feels too unbearable to touch.

His sheets, freshly washed, feel coarse and his soft blanket is scratchy and harsh. His clothes irritate his skin.

Sometimes Reo thinks he knows too much, sees too much, *feels too much*.

His amber eyes are dry and irritated. He knows he should just go to sleep, but he *can't* because everything is on *fire.* Reo Tsukauchi remembers *too much.* But, it's always been that way. It's the repercussions of his quirk.

That's why his head keeps replaying every comment from the live stream he just watched. He's lucky to have even found it, but as more comments stream through his mind he questions whether or not it was actually luck that had led him to that video.

There's nothing he can do about it, not really. Even if he were to say something at this stage nothing would change.

Midoriya was in cuffs again, *still in cuffs* because Reo still hadn't figured out how the vigilante could get them off by himself after the

last time. He'd watched his friend get away, but didn't know if he'd managed to stay that way or not and if the boy didn't show up sometime tonight then he probably wouldn't know until sometime late morning.

The teen studies his hands underneath his lamp for a moment longer before reaching for his phone, the tug of fabric against his skin as he shifts is unbearable. The smooth front of his phone is the only relief he gets.

It's stupidly easy how easy it is to disappear after leaving the convenience store. The ambulance call placed for a downed officer draws everyone back into the vicinity of the store even after Piper has long left the area.

"Villain," his mind hisses.

For once, Midoriya agrees with it. He *feels* like a villain with his shoes still stained with blood and at least three people, two heroes and one, irreplaceable, Tsukauchi Naomasa, enroute to the nearest hospital if they weren't there already. He prays Naomasa is there already.

The vigilante does his best to stick to the shadows and back alleys as he drives himself further away from Musutafu's nightlife crevices. It isn't until some half an hour later that he finally stumbles into a part of the city that he actually recognizes. His limbs beg him to stop, but he continues to push on.

The boy's eyes burn.

He ignores the feeling, heading for more familiar streets until he finds himself standing across the road from Reo's apartment. He can't owe Giran anymore favors, but he also can't find it in himself to make his way up to the boy's room.

The word 'villain' tattoos itself to the inside of his skull, dying the bone black with a parasitic guilt that slowly eats at him.

Midoriya quietly slips down the alley next to the apartment building and sinks to the ground. He finally lets his staff go, metal clanking quietly against concrete. And then he stills. He sits on the pavement silently, leaning back against the nearest wall. He's exhausted and if everything hadn't caught up with him before it does now. The vigilante doesn't want to move. He's tempted to just fall asleep where he is.

He doesn't. Instead he fights off his drooping eyelids and burning eyes and shimmies his phone out of his pocket and stares at the device for another few minutes. His fingers are stiff. He doesn't want to make the call.

But the cuffs around his wrists are still pinching at his skin. He thumbs nervously at his phone, having to contort himself just to be able to look at the screen. Finally makes the call he's been dreading, thumbing at the speaker button.

It rings a few times before someone finally answers.

"Izuku!" the voice crackles loudly through the speaker. "You're alive!"

The boy barely manages to keep himself from crying. "I need you to help me get these handcuffs off," he murmurs softly, head bowed.

"Are you here? I caught the last half of someone's live stream!" Reo whisper shouts from the other end of the line. Midoriya can hear quiet clanging from above and looks up to see the teen scrambling onto the fire escape, looking down. "I saw my uncle run up and I let out the loudest *'NO'."*

Does he know?

"My mom came into my room asking if I was *dying* Izuku. I had to lie and say that I had a nightmare! A lie! I *lied* to a woman with a truth quirk!"

Does he know?

"Reo," Midoriya mumbles softly, "please help me get these off. They hurt." As much as he tries to stop it, his voice cracks. His shoulders ache and he's sure some of his hair is probably matted with a fair amount of blood after getting tackled by that first hero.

Tsukauchi goes quiet on the other end of the line, taking a moment to sober himself. "Right," he mutters before disappearing back inside his window to get his tools. "Do they look the same as the last ones?"

"I'm not sure," Midoriya answers, "I can't see them."

There's a quiet clanking that from the speaker before he spies Reo crawling out the window again. "Didn't you manage to get them in front of you last time?"

“Death Arm’s almost wrenched my shoulder out of socket. I didn’t feel like trying,” the vigilante mutters tiredly, leaning his head back. He can’t see any stars past the city’s light pollution.

The older teen makes his way down the fire escape, tools slung in a bag over his shoulder before he finally drops into the alley. “What happened after you ran away from that Acro dude? That’s where the stream ended. You said something about Death Arms?”

He doesn’t know. He doesn’t know. He doesn’t know. He doesn’t know.

There’s a moment of relief that floods through Midoriya, but the feeling is quickly drowned out by the reminder that his friend will find out what happened sooner or later.

Reo catches a haunted look that passes through his friend’s eyes as he approaches, setting his bag down. The look worries him, calls up memories of months past, of crystal tears and whispers of death and the terrible, horrible pain he could feel radiating off the fifteen-year-old in waves.

But, this look in the boy’s eyes isn’t quite the same. His eyes don’t have quite the same gravity as that of a black hole, but Reo knows the beginnings of a collapsing star when he sees one. “I tried to figure out what was happening but I couldn’t find anything,” he says gently. Something must have happened after the stream cut to put that look in his eyes. “You really had me scared you know. I try not to think too much about what’ll happen if you get caught but… sometimes I can’t help it, you know?”

Midoriya shifts, giving Tsukauchi access to his cuffed hands.

“I’ve read all about vigilante law at this point, I probably know all there is to know, but none of that tells me what’ll happen if you…” Reo swallows, cutting himself off. “I was worried.”

Izuku’s head bows, eyes drifting shut. He doesn’t say anything more.

Tsukauchi gets to work after that, the process is easier than it was the last time, less messy now that he knows what he’s doing. Eventually the cuffs fall away with a click and quiet clatter of metal against pavement.

“Will you come up?” Reo asks, repacking both his tools and the remnants of the quirk suppressant cuffs.

Izuku rubs at his wrists, refusing to look at the older boy.

I crossed the line, he tells himself. *What if he asks for his gear back? What if he turns me in? I need to prepare for that. Pack my things, get ready to run if I have to. I have money and I can ask Giran for help if things go too far south.*

“You could stay over if you want, there might still be people out looking for you,” Tsukauchi implores, trying to catch his friend’s gaze.

The fifteen-year-old shakes his head somberly. “I’ll be fine.”

“Do you want to change at least?” Reo asks, offering a hand to help the other stand. Midoriya takes it hesitantly. “I can keep your stuff here for the night.”

“I doubt anyone’ll come out this far to look for me.” The vigilante finally looks towards the boy, a weak smile shaking at his lips. “You don’t have to worry about me.” He forces his eyes closed with the smile. He doesn’t know if he’d be able to bare staring into those kind, amber eyes that he’d wronged so horribly.

Please be okay, Detective.

“Not even your staff?”

Izuku shakes his head, turning from him to grab the pipe. “Thanks for always helping me.” The words feel like a goodbye. Midoriya Izuku doesn’t want them to be a goodbye. His sun feels like it’s screaming, writhing in his chest, revolting against his ribcage, charring his bones, blistering his insides. He doesn’t want to say goodbye.

The words set Reo on edge for a reason he can’t explain.

Midoriya leaves just as quickly as he came and Reo is left to scale the fire escape by himself with his too heavy thoughts. The roughness of rusted metal beneath his fingers is the only thing that keeps his thoughts from wandering too far. He’s tired of thinking but can’t help himself. Every psychology book and article he’s ever read is roaring through his head. His friend is hiding something, feels… guilty(?) about something. But, textbooks can’t tell him what it is.

Reo crawls through his window again, setting his tool bag on his desk for his future self to deal with. If Midoriya won’t tell him what

happened then he'll have to wait till all the reports go public in the morning. His quirk dealt in information, and not having access to something as vitally important as what was happening with his friend was in danger of driving him mad.

The seventeen-year-old perches himself on the edge of his bed, studying his hands beneath the light of his lamp. He stays like that for a moment longer before turning the lamp off and crawling into bed. His skin doesn't feel as sensitive as it had before, but it's still difficult to fall asleep. He eventually does, but it never lasts too long, and he finds himself waking at random intervals to a new slew of textbook information running through his head unbidden. It's during one of these times, as he's rolling over in bed, that he hears his mother's phone start going off. It's loud and it's annoying and even being halfway across their apartment it still hurts his ears. But, it's normal. His mother's an ER nurse, but she's also a heavy sleeper. If there's a night shift that she has to wake up for then Reo usually has to too because her alarms are just *that loud.* He feels bad she has to go into work again at nearly three in the morning, but this doesn't prevent him from rolling back over to try and sleep.

Reo's finally managed to halfway fall asleep again when she raps gently at his door before pushing it open and allowing herself in. He rolls over to look at her, eyes straining in the dark to try and make out her face.

"Mom?" He asks quietly, voice raspy and tired.

"Your uncle's in the hospital," she tells him calmly, lowly.

This is what truly wakes him up.

Sometimes Reo thinks he remembers too much, sees too much, *feels too much.*

His amber eyes are dry and irritated from lack of sleep and his body tells him he should just close his eyes and try his best to drift away, but he *can't* because his *everything* is on fire. Reo Tsukauchi knows *too much.*

But, it's always been that way. It's the repercussions of his quirk.

It’s also the repercussions of having a vigilante for a best friend.

Gaze-bo reblogged **KickGazzySupportSquad**

Moonpaw17:

[image: *Pied Piper, pinned to the ground by a hero, eyes blown wide with terror, hands cuffed behind his back.*]

[image: *Pied Piper, looking back at an approaching detective, frozen in fear in the middle of the street.*]

|These are the only two photos I’ve ever seen where Piper looks so legitimately terrified.

Jurtleneck-and-Jorts:

it’s really surreal seeing these photographs, it’s got me wondering what Piper was feeling

Gaze-bo:

Got you wondering what????? Op literally answered your question im??????

#me on a wednesday #pied piper

31,956 notes

Queenie👑

[Video: *Pied Piper, at a distance, running towards the camera. Behind him Death Arms wrenches a street sign out of the sidewalk. He hurls it in the direction of the vigilante. It misses him by mere inches and instead skids across the pavement towards the crowd that the bystander films from. Screams go up as everyone tries to back away. The video cuts during the commotion.*]

Liked by **BREathe** and 3,728 others

Queenie👸 Death Arms the dumbass DA the DA he's a HORRIBLE hero and you can't convince me otherwise. I legit would've gotten hit by that sign if I hadn't scrambled to move back. Not only could he have seriously injured who ever that dude was, but he came 👌close to injuring civilians as well 😱 #DeathArmsIsCancelled ✊

view all 238 comments

BleedingNoises !!!!! that's 100% reckless endangerment

questioning.nose wth literally go file a police report against him he could've seriously hurt someone >:(((

Queenie👸 I want to!! My mom is a lawyer so I've been talking to her about what I can do

FatGummyy I HAVE BEEN SEARCHING ALL OVER THE INTERNET FOR THIS VIDEO I HEARD PIED PIPER GOT IN ANOTHER FIGHT WITH DEATH ARMS AND I WAS GONNA FR CRY IF NO ONE HAD GOTTEN A VIDEO THANK YOU SO MUCH

Queenie👸Pied Piper???

BreNGort DA the DA! DA the DA! DA the DA!

FeralBoiFam DA the DA!

P.Piper.Stan DA the DA!!

AllMozzarella DA the DA!

f0the.r DA the DA😎

dootdoot🔧 JUSTICE FOR PIPER!!! DA the DA!👏👏👏

Trending on r/vigilantes

r/vigilantes · Posted by u/disqualT three days ago

Thoughts on Pied Piper?

4,872 upvotes

Alright so I know just about everyone on this site has heard about what happened with Pied Piper at this point, if you haven't then there are hundreds of other posts that will explain everything in unnecessary visual detail.

I want to hear about what everyone thinks about the whole ordeal, most of the reactions I've heard are just ones of shock but it's been awhile so everyone should have had time to digest what happened so what do you all think about what he did? Was it justified? Was it not? I want to hear everyones thoughts (please no infighting in the comments I don't want a headache just respect people's opinions (or just ignore them))

.

black_and_bluesive 1.8k points · three days ago

I'm honestly still shocked about everything I mean I'm kind of????? Idk I almost feel betrayed I guess?? I know this isn't the first time Piper has hurt heroes, I know he's knocked at least one out before, but… This is just a whole different level. I've seen the spikes on his boots before and they're nasty looking things and I then suddenly that video with Acro popped up???? It was horrible and if that wasn't bad enough I heard Death Arms got hurt even worse and that he sent some police officer to the hospital??/

.

CEOofBussy 5k points · three days ago

Was it justified? No offense but that's such a stupid question hurting another person isn't something you can justify, but Piper saves the people that heroes don't. He wasn't justified in hurting the people he did, but the heroes and officers hurt him too Acro tackled him so hard that he had to have gotten at least some sort concussion and Death Arms hurled a street sign at him and some civilians. In my opinion neither of the parties involved in this are 'justified' because what they've done can't be defended.

SSSxTG1 112 points · two days ago

i'd just like to point out that Piper was in the middle of stopping a purse snatcher before Acro showed up, and even before that I heard he pulled a drunk dude out of the road, the heroes were the ones that started it so anything that happened to them was their own fault

VagaB0nd 83 points · two days ago

If Pied Piper would follow the law then this wouldn't have happened, just saying

SSSxTG1 112 points · one day ago

If you followed common sense then maybe you wouldn't have felt the need to be passive aggressive about Piper under my comment about him saving people, just saying

.

NinjaTigger 349 points · two days ago

Personally I don't really see why everyone's making such a big deal out of it, heroes get hurt all the time, it's an occupational hazard. Their wounds will take time to heal sure, but healing quirks exist I've seen worse wounds on better heroes

I've been reading about people who say they're really surprised by what Piper did but??? He's a vigilante?? Of course he's gonna do what he can not to get caught I mean this isn't even the first time he's hurt

a hero before?? I can't tell you how many times I've heard about him electrocuting a hero or a police officer I mean just last month he headbutted Slidin' Go in the face and broke his nose

I don't know I just don't think it's as big of a deal as everyone's making it out to be

BeGayDoCrimeBot 3k points · one day ago

The known tally of assaults conducted by the vigilante Pied Piper is 13 police officers, 8 heroes, 2 civilian (accidental), and over 500 accredited assaults against criminals.

Popular Vigilante Assaults Pro Heroes, Commentary from Witnesses

[Video: News reporter begins speaking. *"Pied Piper, a vigilante who had previously been deemed harmless to civilians and heroes by his growing 'fanbase', is caught engaging in a fight with heroes. Now we get a new glimpse of the true nature behind Musutafu's most infamous vigilante. Please keep in mind that this next clip is graphic and may not be suitable for younger audiences, viewer discretion is advised."*

[video footage: *A voice filters though, "Are you recording this?" The phone camera shakes. "Of course I'm recording it." A police officer passes in front of the camera, trying to keep the crowd at bay. Piper is shown being pulled up and pushed towards a police cruiser. His hands are cuffed behind his back. The footage zooms in shakily on Piper, catching the moment he wraps his leg can be awkwardly around the hero's calve. Shouts go up from the crowd. A muffled, "Holy shit" escaping someone nearby. There's a loud rustling of fabric as the camera's view is obstructed. It clears again to catch a glimpse of the vigilante running towards the crowd before the video pauses, ending.*]

The news report cuts back in. "Our newest reporter, Genji Riaru, is at the scene of the crime, Genji?"

The camera cuts to a young woman standing outside. "Yes, hello. I'm here on the street where Pied Piper's most recent escapade took place. The street looks startling normal compared to what happened here just last night. It was in the middle of this street that Pro Hero Acro originally managed to subdue Musutafu's illusive vigilante. Earlier we asked around the area about last night's incidents, but harbored few results. Many people weren't

even aware that anything had even happened, let alone knew who the vigilante was. But, we were able to track down a few key witnesses to last night's crimes."

A series of interviewees appear on screen, each in what appear to be different settings.

"I really thought it was over after that hero tackled Piper. Like he wasn't just cuffed ya know, those things have quirk suppressants in 'em."

"Oh I for sure thought he was done for, I mean how are you supposed to get away from that many people? But, I guess he did it anyway, pretty bold escape though, totally gross."

"I feel so bad for Acro after seeing what happened to his leg. He's not gonna be able to work for awhile after that. I heard Death Arms got it even worse though!"

"Yeah, it was pretty brutal what he did to that hero, nasty business."

"I don't know… I just… I never expected him to hurt a hero like that. I guess I just thought he was one of the good guys."

"Yeah! That was wild! One chick gave him his pipe back as he was running away and another dude tripped one of the officers trying to chase after him! And then the whole crowd started chanting his name!"

"I mean, I feel bad for that hero, but Piper is the type of guy that doesn't hurt people unless he needs to. He was in a tough spot so I understand why he did it. I heard Death Arms got hurt too, but that dude probably deserved it, he tried to kill Piper when he was first starting out. Can you imagine? Piper probably thought that guy was gonna try and kill him again!"]

4.6M views

MDNNews

6,268 comments

TJRelax - 4 days ago

Fake

N0 Bite Mike - 2 days ago

My favorite vigilante □

WooW12 - 2 days ago

Wait is this like fr fr??? I saw posts about it but I thought it was a copycat or something????

Netflix and Vibe - 1 day ago

Ngl that was kinda badass 😈

Junji Touka - 21 hours ago

PIPER👏 PIPER👏 PIPER👏

ReforgedFromBroken - 16 hours ago

This is why it's so important to have heroes that are always so willing to put themselves on the line like this for everyone else's safety. This could have turned into a truly dangerous situation, especially for civilians, had that villain used his quirk. I hate to think what could've happened. Glad everyone is mostly okay though, no serious damage thanks to Acro and Death Arms!'

GagReGone - 1 hour ago

I can't believe they still haven't caught that dude I'm disappointed in all the people that were involved in that incident

Chapter End Notes

> !!!!!! New chapter!!! I did it!!!!! I'm in class but I'm posting this! I just want to say thank you to all the comments on the last chapter!!! I know I didn't respond to all of the comments but I read all of them and thank you for all the nice one 😩Anyways I've gotta go since I'm in class but I hope you all enjoyed this chapter and are ready for suffering as the story progresses! See

you all next time!

Orbital Decay

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart!!! □□□

Void

Any

Gaze-bo x x x x x

kirbiiis

Reo's finally managed to halfway fall asleep again when his mother raps gently at his door, pushing it open and allowing herself in. He rolls over to look at her, eyes straining in the dark to try and make out her face.

"Mom?" He asks quietly, voice raspy and tired.

"Your uncle's in the hospital," she tells him calmly, lowly.

Reo pushes himself up out of bed, sobering immediately. "He's…"

"He's fine," his mother finishes for him, cutting him off. "He hit his head trying to catch that vigilante. It's just a mild concussion, but doctors are doing an MRI just to be safe."

"Are we going now?"

The woman shakes her head, walking closer so she can ruffle his hair. "Don't even think about it. You've got school in the morning. The fall knocked him out, I'm just going so I can start on some of the paperwork for him. He'll probably be staying here for a while once the doctor discharge him so I can keep an eye on him. You'll be able to see him then kiddo."

Reo's eyes close as her hand falls away from his hair.

"No need to worry," she tells him. She says something else before leaving that he misses past the thoughts crowding his head. Tsukauchi slowly turns to face the window.

“Thanks for always helping me.”

The words turn sour in his head, a bitter taste invading his senses.

“What did you do,” the teen whispers.

Midoriya shoves all of his gear beneath his bed and tries his best to forget about everything. It feels like the kindest thing he can do for himself even though he’s inclined to believe the voice in his head when it says he deserves none.

So, instead of forgetting he takes refuge under his sheets and cries because he still hasn’t cleaned the blood from his boots. He presses a hand against his mouth, biting into the soft tissue in an effort to both ground himself and mute his sobs.

His head pounds along with the pulse of his heart. His chest heaves and he chokes on excess mucus and snot.

Similarly to his friend, there are also times when Midoriya Izuku remembers too much.

Life for Midoriya Izuku is hard.

It’s been hard since he turned four, harder since Bakugou turned on him, harder since he got rejected, harder and harder and harder and harder and sometimes it feels like his life is just continuously getting worse. It got better, for a time, after he met Reo. Better in the sense that he had someone who could help him forget the bad and the bader and the worse. But he’s ruined that and now he has to face the bad and the bader and the worse by himself, again, *alone*. And he can’t remember how he dealt with it before.

Piper’s been laying low for the past week, a rise in activity from local heroes and police driving him further underground. He’d drawn too much attention, hurt too many of the wrong people. He’d never been a figure that was meant to draw eyes.

So, he keeps to shorter patrols and stays in parts of the city that he knows how to hide in. He goes home earlier, sleeps longer, stays away from Reo’s apartment.

He continues to wake up with dark circles, prodding at them in the mirror, questioning why they of all things stick around when nothing else does. They tell him to stop having nightmares and maybe they’ll

leave.

Sometimes he doesn't know if he wants them to leave. (He deserves this.)

He knew he would have nightmares, expected them. Half of the time they usually aren't as bad as ones he's had in the past. The other half of the time they're worse.

He *expects* an endless series of dreams haunted by Reo and Detective Tsukauchi's faces, so if Midoriya had anticipated seeing anything in his latest nightmare it certainly isn't what he's plunged into. He expects hospital wings, and crime scenes, and graveside funerals. He expects his guilt to eat at him just like it does during the day. Perhaps that's what makes this dream so much worse, because he wasn't expecting it.

In the nightmare he's confronted with All Might and his blinding smile. He thinks they're behind his school, or maybe beneath an underpass, or an alley, or somewhere else he can't quite name, the top of some building maybe?

"Do you think I can be a hero?" The boy asks.

The hero's smile does not falter. *"No."*

Black holes yawn open in his chest and Midoriya can feel the world crumbling beneath his feet, breaking apart, disintegrating as the dying stars warble songs of destruction.

There's a howling screech of metal and Izuku turns slowly to see a dumpster falling towards him, pulled in by the whining cry of gravity.

Midoriya turns away from it, body acting as if it isn't there.

"Villains can not become heroes," All Might laughs. And even the laugh gets dragged in by gravity, torn apart by the fall of Midoriya Izuku.

The boy flinches awake before the dumpster can crush him, greeted by a shadowy poster of Japan's number one. He feels his stomach sink, feels his sun shutter.

"Playing at vigilantism will not make you a hero. You'll only be labeled a villain by those whose opinions count the most with no evidence to dispute their claims."

He tries to fight the voice. *I'm saving people,* he reminds himself, desperately clinging to the thought. *I'm saving people.*

Naomasa paces the length of his sister's couch. Thoughts endlessly turning over. He curses himself, he shouldn't have let his guard down. He should've known, *he should've known.* Even domesticated animals lash out when cornered.

The detective runs a hand through his hair, wincing when he passes over the back of his head. Concussion wise it should only be another day or two before he's able to squirm out from under Misaki's thumb and get back to work. But, the external bruising would last longer.

"Pacing won't get you better any quicker."

Naomasa looks up at the voice to see Reo coming out of his room. He looks tired.

"You look worse than me," the man tells him.

"Don't change the subject, it doesn't work on mom and it won't work on me either."

He huffs a laugh, sighing before finally sitting back down as the boy heads for the kitchen.

"You could use the rest, Ojisan. Another day or two won't hurt you," Reo mutters, rummaging through the fridge for something quick to eat.

"You say that," Naomasa says, leaning his head back to study the ceiling, "but you're not the one chained to this couch."

The teen lets out a soft laugh. "Sounds like a *you* problem Iz—" He cuts himself off, brows furrowing. He grabs a small container of cold leftovers before heading back towards his room. "You'll be okay. No need to worry too much."

Naomasa watches him go silently, the words spoken as if they're meant for someone else.

The detective shifts, checking the time. "It's so late already," he mutters. He turns back to stare at his nephew's closed door. "And he didn't even heat up that food."

For Midoriya Izuku school is hell, but it's always been hell. And, if he's being honest, with everything else seemingly crumbling around him the regularity of it all makes him feel a bit more sane, a bit more *normal*. And at the moment he's desperate for any sense of normalcy he can get.

His desire for normalcy so frenzied that he even ponders forgetting, ponders erasing his memories of Reo. If only for the sake of his sanity.

But, he doesn't want to forget.

Midoriya quickly slides his gym uniform on, careful not to draw the eyes of his classmates.

In the last ten months Midoriya has had to be careful in the locker room. His peers have never blinked at the bruises and burns he walks in with. Bakugou's temper left few to second guess them.

But burns aren't the only scars he sports. His worst wound, the one he'd gotten meeting Reo, still lingers as a nasty scar. Even after being professionally stitched the second time it looks almost as bad as the original. He can't say he had taken any better care of it than the first though, so he understands the similarities.

There aren't many noticeable scars, but there are enough to draw eyes if he isn't careful.

Gym class is by far Midoriya's least favorite class, not simply because he has to change in front of a good half of his class. But, because their teacher favors the strong, favors *Bakugou,* favors pretending that he's just *that* blind.

All the teachers pretend to be clueless when it comes to Bakugou's habitual bullying, but P.E. is where he's able to get away with so much more in the name of 'boys being boys'.

A quirk propelled dodgeball is sent flying past him that Midoriya barely manages to dodge with a grimace. Laughter rises from both sides of the court, making his ears burn.

On the other team someone bats another ball at him with the subtle use of their quirk. Unfortunately for them it doesn't have anywhere near the same momentum as the ones that Bakugou's been sending. So instead of dodging, Midoriya catches it.

The impact stings his hands, but he keeps hold of it. He thinks it's pure

spite that has him sending the ball right back at the boy with all the force he can manage. And, unlike Izuku, the boy hasn't had as many years worth of martial arts training to be able to dodge something so quick. So, instead of dodging the ball it slams into his cheek with a loud smack and he hits the floor in time with the ball.

Everyone freezes.

Unlike years past, Midoriya knows how to take better care of himself. He knows how to dodge, and how to hit. There's a sharp blow of a whistle from the teacher as he calls Izuku's name. Chee Sensei might not approve of his behavior, but she certainly wouldn't oppose it if she knew his history.

"Midoriya! You'll be cleaning the gym after school for that!"

In the eyes of his teachers Midoriya Izuku has been labeled as many things, but *weak* is the most common term among them.

And the *weak* are not allowed to hurt the *strong*.

The teen's eyes narrow in the slightest, but he only nods and bows slightly in acknowledgment of the punishment before the game resumes and the other kid is sent to the nurse. Bakugou's hands crackle menacingly, hurling another quirk propelled ball at the green-haired boy with a malicious grin. Midoriya makes to quickly step out of the way but is blocked by another classmate that slams into him from the side with a laugh. It sends him right back into the ball's path.

The ball strikes center mass with a sickening thud, expelling the air from his lungs and slamming him, back first, into the floor. Izuku can only lay there for a moment, stunned and struggling to regain his breath. It takes a minute before he's able to even roll over. From the ache he's sure there'll be a brutal bruise left behind.

Midoriya Izuku has faced scarier villains, so he doesn't know *why*. *Why* it's always Bakugou's grinning, vermillion eyes that terrify him more than death's golden ones had. Fear and anger twist together in his chest.

The teen forces himself to stand, stumbling towards the out bench. His classmates snicker, Bakugou grins, the teacher looks away, pretending to see nothing.

Is this really the normalcy he's been chasing after for the last week?

Is he willing to return here?

Midoriya considers running to the dojo after he finishes cleaning the gym, but ultimately decides against it. He can't bring himself to scrounge up the motivation. He's about an hour late because of this, creeping into the dojo almost completely unnoticed. He doesn't think Ji-woo noticed, too wrapped up in teaching a new group of kids, but he can never be sure with her eyes.

He's used to drifting in and out of places unnoticed. It was one of the perks of being quirkless, though whether it's a perk or not depends on who you ask. He toes off his sneakers and glides across the dojo like a sort of phantom, changing in the small bathroom. He studies the giant bruise forming on his chest and prods at the dark circles beneath his eyes again. His face looks gaunt, sickly beneath the bathroom's yellow lighting.

"Will you continue like this?" A new voice asks him, *"Normalcy will lead to your destruction. Seek destruction and you'll find it."*

Midoriya glances down at his phone watching for a notification he won't receive.

Will he forgive me?

"Seek amends, not forgiveness."

The boy's head dips, eyes fluttering closed. *Right… right.*

I don't deserve his forgiveness.

It's easy to say that the only safe bit of normalcy Midoriya has access to now is the dojo. There are times where he feels like he's learned everything there is to learn here, but the thought of abandoning this place has never once come to mind.

Hirano dodges past a kick of his, and he watches as her muscles tense for a counterattack. Her movements have been getting harder to read in the last few weeks, *she's learning.*

But, Midoriya can still read her eyes. He redirects her punch and feints left. She falls for the feint, eyes following his to the left.

It’s easy to get her to the mat from there. But, even with his experience it shouldn’t have gone as smoothly as it does.

“You seem a little out of it,” Midoriya tells her, nursing his water as they cool down.

Hirano huffs out a quiet laugh, wiping the sweat from her skin with a small towel. “Guess that makes two of us then. I mean I’ve certainly seen you look worse, but you definitely don't look like you're all there either.”

“I was still able to take you down though.”

She bumps him with a shoulder. “Touché.”

The boy has his own problems, big, *bad* problems that would topple just about any other person in his shoes. Because of that he’s had to find different ways to cope over the years, meeting Reo had offered him a healthy venting channel. But, before him Midoriya had manufactured an elaborate form of systematic distraction and denial. And without Reo, he falls back on it once again.

From experience, focusing on other people’s problems has always done a great job of helping him forget his own. So, when there's a moment of silence that follows their short conversation, Midoriya uses it to stew on what could be troubling the girl. It doesn’t take him long to come to a conclusion, the name Tanaka catches fire in his head, blazing across the front of his cerebrum like a meteor. “Is it Tanaka that's bothering you?”

Hirano pauses, expression falling. She lets her hands drift back into her lap, fingers tangled in fabric of her towel. “Yeah. I haven't heard from him personally, but there's always rumors you know… I heard he's been making friends with people he shouldn't, running around doing *things* he shouldn't. I've seen some of the posts from his social media… and at the very least the rumors *look* true.”

Izuku doesn't say anything, letting her continue.

“He's not a bad guy, Midoriya… He's just someone who got caught up in the wrong crowd like I did. But, he got stuck with them a lot earlier than me. He doesn't know any better.”

Midoriya doubts that last part, but feels more sympathetic for the teen nonetheless.

The girl's voice drops lower, “An old friend of ours said that he was starting to fall in with some yakuza group.”

Midoriya wants to tell the girl that there's no need to worry, that the yakuza are things of the past, that they don’t cause trouble anymore. But the words die on lips.

“Where is she!”

“He'll be okay, Hirano,” Midoriya tells her just as quietly. “If anything, he knows how to hold himself in a fight.”

“Where is she!”

His heart shutters.

I'll check on him just in case. He tells himself that what he's planning is for Hirano's sake. He tells himself he's not a liar. After all, denial is one of Midoriya’s strong suits.

So, he forgets for a little longer, pretends he hasn’t done anything which needs worrying over and instead begins working on how to track down Tanaka.

He finds himself at the top of UA again during another one of his nightmares. He can’t hear them in the dream, but some part of him understands that there’s sirens whining in the distance. He’s running from something, *someone*.

Upon waking Midoriya will remember the last time he was on the top of this building, will *remember* what it was that happened here. But, his dream-self doesn’t, doesn’t recognize the parallels, doesn’t fight to wake up before anything worse can take hold of him.

There’s a presence that he senses approaching from behind and turns to see the figure of someone that he recognizes as Reo, even if he doesn’t look like himself.

“Izuku,” he says in a voice that isn’t his. *“Why don’t you do the world a favor? And ta–”*

It’s a short dream, his alarm clock snapping him awake. He throws himself up, limbs tangled in his sheets. But, Midoriya’s thankful. He doesn’t know if he’d survive hearing those words from Reo. He’s thankful, but he still cries.

Izuku is constantly awakened by new nightmares like these. Some of them have people chasing after him, villains, heroes, police. Sometimes Reo joins and sometimes Bakugou joins and sometimes there are explosions and sometimes there are quiet whispers of betrayal. In some dreams Detective Tsukauchi is seriously injured, in some he's dead or dying or being killed. In some Midoriya is taking Naomasa's place, in others he's getting tackled by Death Arms or flattened by a dumpster or a road sign or being killed by the gentle brush of fingertips against his over and over again.

His search for Tanaka begins with the Naka Konita internet café. It feels like the easiest place to start. Hirano had told him exactly where to look just the week before after all.

He'd thought it would be easy enough to wait nearby and see if the teen comes in or out of the building at some point. But, the vigilante spends three hours cramped into some nearby alley waiting for nothing to happen. *A wasted patrol.*

The next night he clambers down their balcony as Midoriya Izuku. He's wearing a large enough hoodie that easily hides his bulletproof vest and utility belt, but stows any other gear he thinks he might need in case of emergency in his backpack. He keeps his hair tucked beneath his hood and dons a white medical mask to hide the lower half of his face.

The straps chafe at the back of his ears. It's been a while since he's had to wear one of these.

He hovers outside of the café for an hour before giving in and slipping inside. The worker inside eyes him suspiciously, he's still built like a fifteen-year-old after all, but they don't say anything after he readily slips the money for two hours across the counter. It's one of the cheaper cafés he's seen, everything arranged openly, long desks of computers set up one right next to another. It makes it easier for him to look for Tanaka. There's quite a few people scattered around the place, some are awake, others sleeping at odd angles. Tanaka Hato is not among them. So, Midoriya waits out the next two hours quietly surfing the internet.

That's how he finds it.

Cay @ MLM Scheming @clownangle · 3d

Just stumbled across that video of that vigilante getting away from Death Arms again and honestly it's so painful to watch like so many people got hurt because of that dude (death arms is still recovering) and he still hasn't been caught 😠✊ i hope everyone recovers soon they deserve better

💬5 ♺ 2 ♡15

💪**BackyardaGAINS**💪 @DeathArmsAlli · 3d

Nothing will hold down heroes! Death Arms and Acro will be back on the streets in no time!!!!

💬 ♺ ♡2

Zinnia 🌩️ @Zinniaaa89 · 2d

I hope everyone recovers!

💬 ♺ ♡1

Any--way @villain_anti · 1d

Get well soon!!! #DeathArms #Arco

💬 ♺ ♡

PROSTITuwuTION @uwuMaaster · 5h

I heard Acro was back on patrol yesterday and that Death Arms will be back in action soon!

💬 ♺ 1 ♡ 3

Cay @ MLM Scheming @clownangle · 2h

That's awesome!!!! I was really worried about them tbh T_T now if only they'll catch that vigilante! Take your revenge my children!!!

MWAHAHAHAHA

♡ 2

Midoriya's breath shudders, phantom blood paints his sneakers.

"In saving me you'll break me."

What if he really was better off caged?

Midoriya leaves half an hour before his two hours are up, thoughts plagued with blood and sleep plagued with nightmares. In this dream hands wrap around his wrists like cuffs, suppressing a quirk he can feel vibrating in his bones, calling him like a black hole calls gravity.

In the unclear void he hears a cry go out, *"Piper!"* Somewhere to his right Eri materializes, solidifying just outside his field of view.

He turns slowly to see her.

"Piper!" she calls again, cherry eyes desperate and bandaged hand reaching out towards him frantically. He tries to fight the hands holding him back. *I can't fail her again.* But, he can.

All the boy does is blink before she disappears, Detective Tsukauchi standing in her place. Eri's outstretched hand is replaced by the man's outstretched weapon. *"Did you tell him to do it?"* the detective asks.

The hands around his wrists tighten, cracking bone as Midoriya lets out a muted cry of pain.

"Did you tell him to do it!?"

Somewhere on the unchartable horizon the rising sun is replaced by one of Reo's amber eyes.

He waits for the weekend to head back to the internet café again, leaving early afternoon and staying till Inko calls him home for dinner. He starts to question whether his timing is just that bad, or if Tanaka has started staying somewhere else since Hirano last saw him.

As the weekend stretches on and the leads on Tanaka dry out Midoriya pushes himself harder, unable to waste any more time at the

café. He'd have to find another way to track the teen down.

After nearly a week the extra hero and police reinforcements have melted back into their regular slots. This is what lets the vigilante stay out later, lets him ignore his problems for a little while longer. He does what he can, where he can, whenever he can. He accumulates cuts and bruises like bandages, using them to cover emotional wounds.

He saves a few people. Some of them thank him, others gawk in fear before running away. He helps a cat out of a dumpster, but all it does is lash back, back paws clawing at his hoodie, teeth sinking into his gloves. He sets it down gently and watches it sprint out of the alley.

He wonders if that's what Detective Tsukauchi saw when he cornered him in that convenience store. If he looked like nothing more than a feral animal, attacking anyone who drew too close.

His next dream is scarily mundane for how vivid it is. He finds himself standing on their apartment's balcony, hands resting on the lip of the half wall. It's bright outside, colors glowing. On the thin strip of grass below he can see Reo and Eri. He's spinning the little girl around in the air, laughing with each other. They're far away, but Midoriya can see so many specific details. The sunlight is dappled and his friend's amber eyes glow gold beneath the sun. Eri's eyes shine like rubies, whispering soft assurances of total happiness. Reo's feathery, tar-black hair rises with his laughter like a scene straight from a ghibli movie and Eri's wispy white strands follow suit.

The dream sticks around, clinging to him even after waking. It wasn't that long of a dream, more a moving image than anything else. But he can't get it out of his head, he finds that this dream hurts more than many of his nightmares. Because he can't *forget*.

All of his repressed thoughts are fighting against him, struggling to come up like the bile hovering in the back of his throat. Their laughter turns his stomach.

He'd failed to save Eri. He'd ruined his friendship with Reo.

His eyes well up.

Logic tells him that you can't save everyone. The demons in his head tell him he's a failure if he doesn't.

A whisper in his head tells him to, *“seek amends, seek amends.”*

So he does.

Reo ⟩

Text Message

Today 2:14 AM

M sorey

sorry

Im sorry

Sory

Sorry

Today 2:22 AM

Can you come over?

on my wy

way

Sorry

I’m so sorry

His eyes are bloodshot by the time he makes it beneath the fire escape up to Reo’s apartment.

This could be a trap, Midoriya tells himself. But, he deserves whatever Reo decides to do with him. Whether it's take his gear or turn him in. He has no right to feel betrayed after what he did.

“Seek amends, seek amends.”

Really that's all that Midoriya thinks he can do.

He's in his civilian clothes, his only vigilante gear are a few pieces that

he's shoved into the backpack on his shoulder. All of them are the pieces made by Reo's hands. He's prepared himself to give them back if that's what his friend asks.

He scales the fire escape deftly as usual, but anxiety slows him down, makes each step feel heavier than it should be.

Seek amends, seek amends.

He pauses outside of Reo's window. The curtains are drawn shut, but Midoriya can see light seeping through the threadbare fabric. In his head he can see the teen sitting at his desk, working on whatever recent idea has caught his attention. In a darker part of his mind there's a team of police and heroes waiting for him behind the bedroom door.

Midoriya softly taps against the window before he can think of it anymore. His heart is in his throat, right alongside the food he'd eaten for dinner.

There's movement from inside as Reo parts the curtains, first taking note of the boy's normal clothes, then the dark circles and the blood shot eyes. The older teen's shoulders relax a fraction before he pulls open the window.

"Hi," Midoriya says quietly, its a breathy and broken word.

Reo's response is a soft one, "Welcome back."

Midoriya thinks he could break down then and there but he doesn't. He pulls what pieces of himself that he can back together and slips inside the apartment.

"So," Reo starts, "I made something that will hopefully help with your vigilante stuff. Not too sure what use it'll be, but I needed something to do so I went ahead and made it anyway," Tsukauchi tells him, walking towards his work desk.

Midoriya stares after him, dumbfounded.

"What?"

"It's a grappling hook. Nothing too fancy," the teen continues. "Spin, swing, and aim, it's one of the more manual pieces of tech I've made. But the cordage is retractable and the spikes lay flat when it's not being used. You can clip the base to your belt as well."

The boy's confusion fades into a deep ache in his chest. *He's trying to act normal for me.*

Midoriya feels his eyes well up again, burning with tears. He tries to hold them back, tries to piece himself back together, tries to be strong. But Reo has always been a person he was allowed to be weak around. Tears make their way down his cheeks as his friend continues talking, fiddling with the grappling hook on his desk and running through how it works and where the cable's stored and what the button does. Izuku snivles and Reo turns back towards him. There's a moment of silence.

"Midoriya," the other begins quietly, his tone sobering quickly. "I knew something had happened when you came by that night. It felt… *wrong* when you left. And when I found out what it was... I was upset you didn't tell me. But, I understood why you didn't." Reo huffs a sad laugh, "I mean I kind of did the same thing when I didn't tell you who my uncle was. I put you in danger then."

"I'm sorry," Midoriya cries, swiping blindly at his eyes, pushing back his tears.

"He's okay, Izuku."

All of the deep dark that the boy had tried to hide for so long comes spilling out now like diseased flood water. All of the thoughts and the nightmares and the demons in his head, all of the pent up *heartache* swamps his chest, drowning his heart, his *sun*.

"I didn't want to hurt him," the boy weeps.

"I know."

His eyes burn, chest aching so terribly. "I just want to save people," the boy chokes out.

Reo knows this. To him it's just another fact of life. "I know… I know."

Musutafu goes without its vigilante that night, but Reo does not go without his friend.

Chapter End Notes

!!!!!! I know it's quarantine but this chapter literally took me so

long to write 😩😩😩 But!!! It's here! I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy!! I for one have asthma and therefore have not left my house in 4 weeks but we're gucci for now □□□
Anyway! Stay safe! See you next time!!

Sagittarius A*

Chapter Notes

(Gazzy if you're reading this stop and go tf to sleep you bastard)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart: !!!!!

blackholeca x

alex-gray-666 x x

x(tw:// flashing lights)

Workaholic

Reo's somewhat embarrassed to say that he also tears up after a while of Midoriya's incessant apologies. His shoulder's still wet from his friend's tears and his knees ache from kneeling on the floor beside him. They pop and crack as he stands. He offers the other a hand up.

Izuku croaks out a rough thank you as he too finally gets to his feet.

Reo doesn't want the boy to leave, but he catches Midoriya reluctantly eyeing the window.

"I should go," he finally murmurs weakly. Finals week starts tomorrow."

Reo sighs lifting a hand to rustle the younger teen's mess of shamrock curl. He gives him a small smile. "I know you'll do great. Make sure you text me when you get back."

Midoriya laughs weakly. "I will."

Once he's slipped out the window he goes up instead of down. He tests out the grappling hook Reo had given him, using it to make his way up to the top of the building. He'll need to practice using it if he wants it to be useful in high adrenaline situations.

Midoriya hauls himself over the lip of the apartment's roof, dusting himself off and shoving the grappling hook into his backpack with the rest of the vigilante gear Reo had made. The rooftop gives him time to

gather himself. Even after his talk with Reo the vigilante still feels a crushing amount of guilt swirling in his chest. Reo wasn't really the one he needed to apologize to.

The boy sighs, cool night air biting at his cheeks. "Tomorrow then."

Naomasa is tired. He's so very, stupidly tired. Not necessarily physically tired, but mentally so. There had been a lot of public backlash against the vigilante after their last encounter and because of that the station had been unusually busy with reports on Piper's supposed whereabouts. There were more people eager to see him behind bars. And, with Tsukauchi having been gone for the last while while recovering, the investigative team handling the kid's case had been short staffed, quickly falling behind. Even the hero commission had been asking after the vigilante's whereabouts. That'd been a phone call that'd left him with a pit of dread in chest.

Sansa doesn't have eye bags that give away his exhaustion like some of the others on the team, but the angle of his ears and the dragging of his tail is enough to clue the detective in. Tsukauchi hangs up the phone from this latest report, leaning back in his seat for a brief moment of respite. "Sansa," he calls after a few seconds.

"Yes?"

"Go home."

The feline glances at the nearest clock. "It's only 5, sir."

"I know. That's why I'm telling you to go home. You need more sleep than most people right? Just be prepared to work hard tomorrow," the detective says, looking his way.

The officer's whiskers twitch in amusement. "Yes, sir. Make sure you get a proper eight hours yourself."

"I'll try my best," he laughs, watching as his friend packs up his things and clocks out.

"Goodnight, Detective," Sansa calls as he heads towards the elevators.

"Goodnight, Sansa."

It's not even a few minutes later that the phone on his desk rings again, drawing his attention. He can only pray it's not about Piper.

“Quirk crimes division, Detective Tsukauchi speaking.”

“Yes Tsukauchi-san, this is Tokage. Someone dropped some food off for you at the front desk.”

The man immediately relaxes. “Oh? Was it my sister?”

“No, a teenager. They didn't give a name.”

The man chuckles. “Probably my nephew then. Misaki must've sent him with leftovers. Alright thanks for giving me a heads up, I'll be down soon.”

“Mhmm. I caught Yū eyeing it so best hurry.”

Naomasa huffs a laugh. “Tell Yū to keep their paws off. I'll be there in a sec.”

The detective rubs tiredly at his eyes as he hangs up. The food has come at just the right time. He hauls himself up, stretching for a moment before heading out towards the front desk.

As soon as he's made it down to the first floor Tokage passes him the bag of food to him with a smile. “That's a nice nephew you've got there. He's the one in that support course right?”

Naomasa nods, checking the food. “Yeah.” Instead of a few of Misaki’s spare tupperware containers he finds a large box of takeout. He’s surprised but certainly not disappointed. Yū’s head peeks over his shoulder, their mouth watering. “That's from that really nice restaurant on block 12 right?”

“Is it?” He grins, shooing the officer back towards his post. “They must have felt bad for me.”

“Wish someone felt that bad for me,” Yū mutters under their breath, walking away.

He and Tokage laugh at the other's plight before Naomasa thanks the two and heads back up. He sets the bag down on his desk, falling back into his seat.

There's a small note that flutters out as he pulls the food out of the bag it'd come in. The man assumes it's just a receipt before flipping it over.

For: Tsukauchi Naomasa

Take care of yourself, don't forget to eat.

(Sorry about before.)

A furrow forms between the detective's brows. "Sorry? What's Reo sorry for?" Naomasa pulls the container open, suddenly very aware of his hunger. He cracks a set of chopsticks open, shoving a piece of steak into his mouth. The detective melts into his seat. "Oh that's good," he mumbles around the food. He smiles to himself, taking another bite of food. "I don't know what you're apologizing for kid, but apology accepted."

With Midoriya's last year of middle school finally over, Izuku is set free from the chains Aldera had bound him in. There's no part of him that will miss the memories of that place. The wrinkled pages of his newest notebook is proof enough of that. And though he and Bakugou will still be going to the same school he doubts they'll hardly cross paths. Gen Ed and the hero course reside within two separate worlds of their own. The prospect of new bullies appearing has crossed his mind, but he knows they wouldn't hold the same power over him as Bakugou did.

Katsuki Bakugou had carved himself into Izuku's life like a gruesome scar that still aches when prodded. Midoriya was determined to make sure that 'Kacchan' would be the only one of his bullies to do this.

But graduating had indicated more for the vigilante than that of simple freedom. With the beginning of their spring break two separate occasions are marked for him. The first of which is his two week notice before his first day at UA. The second of which is Midoriya's revamped hunt for Tanaka. His revitalized search for the older teen leads him to somewhere he should've been looking at long before.

Midoriya doesn't use social media often, at least not in the local sense. He doesn't use it to keep up with what's happening to family or people at school, instead using it to get info on recent hero fights and crime busts. It helps him feel out the current climate when it comes to hero work and as a vigilante info like that is always important to know.

Of all the social media accounts that Midoriya has, only one of them is attached to his legal name. And, of all the accounts he follows on

there only three are people he knows personally: Reo, Gamon, and Hirano.

It's Hirano's account that leads him straight to Tanaka.

Hirano follows a *lot* of people, but if it means tracking Tanaka down everything he's done until now will be worth it. It takes Midoriya scrolling through at least three fourths of her *following* tab just to find Tanaka's smug face, but once he does there's a bead of triumph that settles in his chest. The vigilante quickly taps on the profile.

The newest post is from 3 hours ago.

tnk_ht

[Video: Loud music can be heard blaring as an unknown man climbs on a kitchen table. In the background someone shouts, "Break that table and I break your face!" The unknown man stands, dancing along to the music before he slips, toppling both him and the table to the floor. A roar of laughter breaks out within those gathered. "Oh shit! Think he broke his face on his own Haddo!"]

Liked by .**AppleHat3r.** and 5 others

tnk_ht the vibes at **@Haddo3**'s place are wild 🔥

view all 3 comments

Haddo3 If anyone else shows up I'm charging entry to buy a new table

tnk_ht and a new toilet seat

Haddo3 WHAT HAPPENED TO MY TOILET SEAT

The post gives Midoriya a place, but not an actual location he knows how to find. Tanaka's at Haddo's place, but who the hell is Haddo? He reloads the page, but nothing changes. He checks Haddo's account as well but as expected there's nothing to indicate where the guy might live.

For the next week he continues checking on the account almost obsessively, searching for any clue where he might be able to track the

older teen down. More importantly, searching for a clue to track down any possible connections to the yakuza group Hirano mentioned Tanaka had been hanging around.

It isn't until the final few days of March that Midoriya finally gets the lead he's been looking for.

———— ———— ————

tnk_ht 20m

[image: exterior of a somewhat decrepit looking karaoke bar, the neon sign outside reads, *Kanaria*. Text says: let's gooooo🍺]

———— ———— ————

tnk_ht 9m

[video: Tanaka holds up a can of beer towards the camera, lazy grin on his lips. Behind him are Haddo and a few others. Two unknown people are shown loudly singing off key to some English pop song.]

———— ———— ————

tnk_ht 1m

[image: shaky photo of Haddo singing. Text reads: HELP HADDO IS KILLING US LMAOOOO]

It's way too early for Midoriya to head out as Piper, but it’s also too late for him to wander around as himself. Inko’s still awake, busy cleaning up after their late dinner. So, he uses the only excuse he can think of to use in this situation.

The fifteen-year-old makes his way down the hall to the kitchen, peeking out from the behind the corner with a forced sort of casualness. “Hey, Mom. Is it okay if I spend the night at a friend’s house tonight?”

Midoriya Inko looks up at him in surprise. It takes approximately seven seconds for her to burst into tears.

“Make sure to pack a toothbrush! And pajamas! Oh, and an extra pair of socks just in case!” Inko calls as the boy slips down the hall. He can hear her nervously pacing in the kitchen. He doesn't pack any of the items she tells him to though, instead filling his backpack up with all the vigilante gear that'll fit and wearing as much of it as he can get away with. He throws on the pants and the bullet proof vest and slips an oversized all might hoodie over it all to draw attention away from the fact that he's wearing pants Inko doesn't know he owns. Everything else goes into the bag, though the spikes on his boots are on the verge of stabbing through the back of the bag. He doesn't know how he'll sneak his staff out, or if he even should. He knows how to fight without it, but he knows he'll still feel naked not having it.

He doesn't really have a choice in the matter though and leaves it tucked safely beneath his bed. When he steps out of his room again Inko is standing by his door. She looks like she’s tearing up again. “Promise me you’ll call as soon as you get there, okay?” she whispers, walking towards him to take his cheeks between her hands.

He offers her a soft smile, placing one of his hands over her’s. “I will.”

Inko watches the boy leave with a teary smile on her lips. “I should invite that boy's family over for dinner soon.” She swipes at some of the gathering tears. “I hope they're nice enough people.”

Midoriya finishes donning the rest of his gear in a nearby alley, checking for any possible cameras beforehand. He shoves what civilian clothes he wore out into his backpack. And uses the mirror-like window of a nearby building to put his contact in before scaling the nearest building with his new grappling hook to hide his backpack on the roof. He types the building's address into his notes so he doesn’t forget it before pulling up Tanaka's story again so he can look up the name of the karaoke bar. The teen’s bread crumbs would lead the vigilante directly to him.

He’s been waiting outside the Karaoke bar for almost an hour, already having had to call Inko about ‘having made it to Reo’s’. Several people have come out at this point, but none of them have been Tanaka. The vigilante has already begun settling in for the long hall when he catches sight of Haddo coming out, Tanaka following close behind him. He thinks they're both leaving until the two of them make a turn

into a nearby alley. Midoriya glances down the street, checking for both cars and people before he jogs across, hiding behind the corner. The stink of cigarettes greets him along with drunken laughs.

“-’re tellin’ me that you fell for some recruitment scam a friend dragged you into?” The voice belongs to Tanaka.

“I’m tellin’ you it's *not* a scam. These guys are gatherin’ up a *lotta~* people. Well over a hundred fighters, ya know? And I don't know what they're planning, but I know I wanna be on their side when it happens.”

Midoriya slips out his phone, using it as a sort of mirror so he can see what the two are doing. Haddo has a cigarette between his lips, Tanaka waving off his offer of one.

“You don't even know what they're planning?”

Haddo takes a long drag of his cigarette. “Not anything specific. But, I know how to fight and that’s the kind of people they’re lookin’ for.”

Midoriya can hear the grin in Tanaka’s voice. “Fighting’s always exciting.”

He curses under his breath. *I was right to be worried. The Precepts are the only yakuza group I know that’re big enough to pull in so many people like that.* The vigilante scowls.

“I found out about it through an old highschool friend of mine. He runs this insta account where he posts all the times and locations of meetings and stuff like that. A.L.B.T.M,” he spells out, “Short for ‘a little birdy told me’. Clever, right?” Haddo smirks. “Course, everything’s all coded, but it’s easy to figure out if ya’ know what you’re lookin’ for.”

From the reflection in his phone screen Midoriya can see Haddo showing Tanaka something on his own phone.

“Every post has these keysmashes, right? But, the letters correspond to numbers to make up coordinates.”

“What is it just a,b,c,1,2,3 or something?” Tanaka asks sarcastically, huffing a laugh.

The other man gives him a toothy grin that Midoriya catches through his phone’s reflection. “Smarter than you look, huh?”

“Okay—” Tanaka says suspiciously, dragging out the word. “But, then what about the times ‘n stuff?”

Haddo waves him off. “I’ll tell you about that later. Once I’m sure they’ll let you in. I’m probably not even supposed to tell you about the location stuff yet,” he laughs, “but I doubt they’ll turn you away. I heard you won a lot of those martial arts tournaments so I’m sure you’ll be fine.” He smiles, sticking his phone back in his pocket and roughly patting Tanaka on the back with the hand that’s still holding the cigarette. “‘S gonna be a lot of fun.”

Midoriya can feel exhaustion creeping up on him as he slips his shoes off on the fire escape, knocking quietly on Reo’s window. There's a click and a soft knock in return letting the vigilante know the window’s unlocked. He slides it open, batting curtains out of the way as he squeezes through.

Reo’s sitting at his desk, working on something he has beneath one of his mobile magnifying glasses. Midoriya decides against disturbing him and instead changes out of his vigilante gear, slipping his All Might hoodie back on. He tucks all the gear that won't fit in his bag beneath his friend’s bed for safe keeping.

“Is it okay if I crash here for the night?” Midoriya finally asks, collapsing onto Reo’s bed.

His friend only grunts in acknowledgement.

“Are you actually listening to what I'm saying?”

Another grunt.

“Sometimes I shower in my vigilante gear because it feels like a warm hug.”

Reo starts to vocalize another grunt before he pauses, turning towards the vigilante with a confused look. “You what?”

Midoriya only laughs, smothering it with a hand. “I was asking if I could spend the night here but you weren't listening,” he chuckles. “I needed to leave early so I told my mom I'd be staying at a friend's house.”

“Ah, yeah that's fine. Why'd you need to leave early though?”

There’s a moment of silence, a furrow forming between his brows. “I was doing some recon, a friend of mine from the dojo was worried about someone she used to hang out with. He's been messing around with people he shouldn't and I… I think it's the Precepts.”

Reo reacts exactly the way Midoriya had been expecting him to. The teen’s eyes darken, but he doesn't say anything, waiting for Izuku to finish.

“Someone's gathering up a bunch of people for something and my money’s on Overhaul.” Midoriya whispers. “I don’t know what they're planning, but it’s evidently something big. I managed to get info on where they meet, but I don't know when any of the meetings are.” The boy throws an arm over his face, the backs of his eyelids painted a cherry red.

Somehow he knows Reo understands what, *who,* he's thinking of.

“Let the police handle it.”

Midoriya pauses, thoughts grinding to a halt. He pushes himself up to stare at the other teen. He starts to respond, but there's a hard look that he catches in Reo’s amber eyes and for a moment Midoriya can only see gold eyes and hair that lengthens at the edges of his vision, suddenly more brown than black. The illusion only lasts for as long as it takes him to blink, but his heart still pounds wildly in his chest, sun roaring for him to *stay away from his hands.* The boy does his best to shake off the feeling, but when he finally speaks all that comes out is a broken, “Yeah.”

The conversation from their last argument rises, memories he wishes he could forget.

“Damn it Midoriya!”

Reo's right. He's always been right. He's too close to everything, he's been letting his emotions control him and emotions were the enemies’ best friend. That's why he'd *died* the last time.

He’s only just heard about how many people they're planning on gathering, and yet he was already preparing to do things by himself again. “You're right,” he murmurs, more in control of himself this time.

Reo looks surprised.

“You told me once to work within my means, but I couldn't drag myself out of my head long enough to actually go through with it. It was… It was selfish to think that I had to be the one to save that girl. I'm only one person,” he whispers, studying his hands. “The police... they have procedures for stuff like this.”

“Thank you,” Reo says quietly.

This time it’s Midoriya who looks up in surprise.

“My uncle’s a cop, Midoriya. So naturally my mom worries about him a lot,” he explains, “I worry about him too, but I don’t think I ever fully got what she was going through until you and I met. We’re *friends,* Izuku. It’s only natural that I’d worry about you and get angry when you get hurt or when you put yourself in even more danger than you usually are.” Reo bunches the fabric of his shorts beneath his fingers, brows furrowed low over his stormy, amber eyes. “You said it yourself… It’s selfish to think that you have to do everything alone.” His voice drops to a whisper, “You can’t save people if you’re dead.”

The words strike the fifteen-year-old like a physical blow. What would his mother do if he died? There’s a long moment of silence where neither of them say anything, a swirling of guilt hanging between the two.

“I’ll try and get some more info from Giran and then tell your uncle,” Midoriya tells him in a hushed voice, “I don’t want to have to contact them several times over. It could be dangerous for me.”

Reo nods. “Good idea. Nice to see you still have at least half a brain cell.”

Izuku lets out a somewhat strained chuckle, “Rude. You've got a futon in the hall closet right?”

“Take the bed,” Reo tells him, “I doubt I'll be sleeping tonight. With us out of school for the next two weeks I’ve got big plans.” There's a glint in teen’s eyes as he turns back towards his project. “Big plans,” he murmurs.

The day after his talk with Reo the vigilante heads to the only person he knows who might be able to tell him what's going on. He shows up at the broker's warehouse unannounced, sneaking past what people mill around the first floor.

The vigilante creeps up the steps and slips through the office door to find Giran already waiting on him.

The man smiles at him. “It's my job to know who comes in and out of this building. I don't guess anyone saw ya’ comin’ in did they? If you know, tell me quick.”

Piper sighs, the noise distorted by his mask. “If anyone saw me I doubt I would've made it in here as quietly as I did.”

“Take a seat then.”

“I'll stand.”

The broker leans back in his chair, eyeing the vigilante. “That's a nice mask you've got there. Don't think I've seen you with it in person til now. A nice piece of tech…”

“I'm not telling you who made it.”

Giran laughs, “Course you wouldn't. At least compliment the designer for me.”

“I won't.”

“Still so wary of me? After all the times I've helped you?”

“You're still a villain Giran.”

The man peaks at the boy over the rim of his spectacles, pink eyes calculating. “In the eyes of the law, so are you.”

Blood stained shoes. Skull cracking against tile. The vigilante folds his arms over his chest, shifting his weight to a more causal position. “Someone’s gathering up people. I know you know it and I need to know what it’s for. What'll it cost me?”

If the broker picks up on the fact that he's deflecting he doesn't show it, merely holding up a hand up to stop the vigilante. “I can’t say nothin’ ‘bout that.”

Piper blinks at him for a moment in surprise, all thoughts of negotiation suddenly throw out of his head. He had prepared for the wrong type of conversation. “What?”

“I can't give you what you're lookin’ for,” Giran tells him again.

There's a roaring in the boy's chest that's all noise and emotion. His sun vibrates. Hirano set him on this trail to check on Tanaka, to make sure the older teen stays out of trouble. But, for Midoriya he always saw this as another way to find Eri. The girl is constantly at the back of his mind, bandaged arms outstretched towards him in his nightmares, eyes redder than Bakugou's pleading him for salvation.

He'd been too weak. He is still too weak, but he can't let that stop him from trying. This could be his clue to finally finding Eri, but Giran has suddenly become an obstacle. He became so used to the broker being part of his supporting cast that, even after calling him a villain, he'd forgotten who he was dealing with.

Does he think I couldn't afford to pay him? Is that what this is?

The vigilante needs whatever information the broker has. Giran has helped him before, he was the one who gave the boy the clues he needed to track down the house Kogane Gizō was being held in. And while the vigilante had finally been able to take Kogane's face off the back of his closet wall, Eri's name remained, hanging in the dark with threads connecting her to blurry images of her abusers.

"I don't care how much it costs Giran. I need to know what they're doing."

But the broker only shakes his head. "I told you. I can't say anythin'."

The noise in his chest gets louder, vibrations more violent. His sun sings a wordless song of desperation. He can't afford an obstacle like this.

Piper's eye's darken. "That's a dangerous statement coming from a man whose career I could destroy by word of mouth alone."

The broker eyes him over the rim of his spectacles. "I'm more scared of these people than I am of you, Piper. Businesses can be rebuilt, *people* cannot." There's an easy smile on the man's lips.

The vigilante scowls. "I thought you didn't work with the Precepts."

Giran raises his hand in a defensive manner but doesn't dispute the claim. "Like I said, these are dangerous people."

There were few things the broker had ever denied him, weapons, a name or two, the video evidence of a few crimes that'd been committed. But this, this was…

“Don't hold it against me, kid. I really can't help ya’ this time.”

It’s been another long week at the precinct, but as time drags on the reports on Piper have started falling back to a more manageable level. Naomasa’s still tired all the all time, but it’s nowhere near the extent that it had been before. The reprieve gives him the chance to finally thank his sister for the food.

He dials the woman’s number on the way back to his apartment. Riding the elevator up as he fishes his keys out of his pocket.

“Nao? What’s going on? You’re not hurt again are you?”

The man lets out a strained chuckle, “No.” He tucks the phone between his head and shoulder, unlocking his apartment’s door. “I just forgot to thank you for that food you had Reo drop off last week. It was really good,” he laughs.

“What are you talking about?” He can hear the confusion in her voice.

“Reo dropped some take out for me at the precinct last week,” tells her, pushing open his door. “I figured you were the one who asked him to do it.”

“Reo didn't leave the house last week, Nao. He’s been working on some new project like his life depended on it.”

“Are you sure?” the detective asks, brows furrowing.

There’s a rustle off some sort that filters through the speaker as he slips his shoes off. “Reo! Did you drop any food off at the precinct for Uncle Nao last week?”

Reo’s voice filters through more quietly, barely audible, “No, was I supposed to?!”

“He said no.”

The detective shifts the hold on his phone. “The people up front said a teenager had dropped it off,” mutters to himself.

“Well, either way it wasn't us. By the way, do you want to join Reo and I for dinner this week? That Midoriya boy, you know Reo’s friend? Well his mom invited us to eat at their house and wanted me to ask if you wanted to come as well.”

But, Naomasa is only half listening at this point. “Sorry, I don't think I'll be able to make it.”

“Some other time then.”

“Yeah.”

“*Yeah,*” she mocks, parroting his voice back at him, “What’s with that voice? Anyway I gotta start dinner so I’ll let you go. Take care of yourself, and—”

Naomasa cuts her off, finishing the sentence in a haze, “—don't forget to eat.”

“Well that too, but I was gonna ask you to say hi to Sansa for me. You should invite him around to dinner sometime. It's been–”

He tunes her next words out.

(Sorry about before.)

“Misaki I’ve gotta go.”

“Alright then. Remember to invite Sansa sometime. I’ll talk to you later Nao. Love you.”

“Love you too.” He hangs up in a daze. *Who dropped it off? Who’d left me the food? Who was it that apologized?*

“You’re a good man, Detective… Call an ambulance…. Make sure he’s taken care of.”

(Sorry about before.)

He curses under his breath.

Chapter End Notes

Hi everyone! Today is a special posting day because not only am I finally done with school for this semester! BUT!!! It's also Piper's official posting anniversary!!! I'd like to thank everyone that's stuck around for this story for so long I truly appreciate all of the love and support that I receive on every chapter it really means a

lot to me! I'd also like to thank my beta Avery for being here with me from the start of it all I don't know what I'd do without you □ □□

Well! I hope you all enjoyed the chapter! If you follow the Pied Piper tumblr or have joined the Discord then you'll know just how close we are to finally getting to UA (its been so long i know aksdfjhasjkdfh)!!! I'm excited for you all to see what happens next and I hope you are as well! Until then I'll see you next time!!

Conjunction

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart!! x x

Workaholic (Marcelo)

Spaixel

Naomasa wonders why he didn't realize before. Any physical evidence of the vigilante's visit has already been eaten or hauled off in trash bags and surveillance cameras offers the investigative team little to no conclusive evidence on who the kid is.

In all technicality the detective couldn't even *prove* that it was Piper that gave him the food. He asks the two officers that were working upfront if they remember anything about the boy, but neither can give him any more clues than the cameras.

Yū laughs sheepishly scratching at the back of their head when he asks if they remember anything, "The only thing I can remember is the food."

Naomasa pauses, suddenly realizing the implications of the words. He looks up at the officer. "You said you knew what restaurant the food had come from, right?"

"Oh! That's right!" Yū exclaims, coming to the same conclusion. "If you know where the food came from then you can try tracking that kid down from there!"

But, the restaurant offers them only a few extra clues.

"Oh you mean that one kid?" The hostess laughs. "Yeah he had this stupidly expensive takeout order. I didn't think he'd be able to afford it but he just whipped out this giant wad of cash and I absolutely *lost it."*

"Do you remember what he looked like?" Naomasa asks, writing down the info.

"Uh… He had a hoodie and a face mask on but I think he had blonde

hair? I just know he had these two really long strands that just hung down in front of his face like bunny ears.” The woman tries her best to mimic what it looked like with her hands.

“Do you know what color his eyes were? Or any other details about his appearance or what he was wearing? Anything that stands out to you at all.” The detective tries not to let a frown tug at his lips. This wasn't as good of a lead as he thought it'd be.

“Sorry.” The woman sighs, attempting a smile. “I don’t think I remembered much more than that.”

The detective sighs, pinching at the bridge of his nose. “All that time spent on leads that go nowhere.” He stands, packing his things for the night. It's been several hours since he'd found himself at the restaurant and since then he's been running through as much surveillance footage as he could to no avail.

His phone buzzes on the desk and the man perks visibly despite the late hour. He prays that it's the lady from the restaurant having just gotten off of work, prays it's to tell him that she’s miraculously remembered the key to finding Piper.

He isn't expecting the vigilante himself to be on the other end of the line.

“Detective Tsukauchi.”

The man freezes, eyes whipping to the empty desks around him. He was alone in the office. “Piper.”

A tense silence falls between them that's eventually broken by a sigh from the vigilante. “Detective, I'm going to cut to the chase. I came across some info that someone’s gathering up fighters. A *lot* of fighters.” Naomasa tenses, listening carefully as the teen explains the details of the situation and his thoughts on who's behind it. “I don't know what they're planning, but it's something big. It's…” Piper trails off. “It's more than I can handle by myself.”

“Be honest with me Piper,” Naomasa says quietly.

“Depends on the question, Detective.”

There's a moment where Naomasa thinks over his next words,

carefully stringing them together. “Are you okay?”

Midoriya opens his mouth to respond, surprised.

“And I don’t just mean physically.”

Midoriya’s grassy eyes fall towards the dark streets below him. Passing cars leaving streaks of white and crimson. “I should be the one asking that,” the vigilante laughs weakly.

“I know you’re capable of taking care of yourself, you’ve made that much clear,” Naomasa chuckles. “But I still worry about you, kid.”

“Your question,” Midoriya whispers, “The answer is probably not, but… I will be… eventually.”

“I could help, you know.” The vigilante can hear the exhaustion slipping into the other's voice. The last conversation they’d had like this had landed the detective in the hospital. But, Midoriya wasn't cornered anymore. He wasn’t stuck inside a convenience store with only one way out. “You're still a kid. Obviously you'd get more than a slap on the wrist considering how much you've done. But, you could still save people. I'd make sure of it.”

“Thank you,” Izuku tells him sincerely, looking out over Musutafu's skyline. And, he is thankful. This man who's spent nearly a year trying to catch him cares about him on a level that only a handfull of people have cared about him since his fourth birthday. “But, the story you're seeing… It isn't all of it. If I give up, if I get caught, that's the end. I won't be able to save anyone anymore. They won't let me.”

“Then tell me the rest of the story.”

The vigilante shakes his head. “I’m sorry, but I can't do that.”

Naomasa turns the words over in his head for what feels like hours. *“They won't let me. They won't let me.”* He’d said something similar the last time they’d met and here the words return. *What does Piper know that makes him believe that with such certainty?*

“If he won't tell me that could mean it's a clue to being able to find him, or at least something important about him,” Naomasa mutters,

kicking off his shoes at the door to Misaki's apartment.

The light in Reo's room is still on, seeping sluggishly beneath the door.

He raps at the door as quietly as he can, pushing it open. He finds Reo's tinkering with something at his desk and sees a head of green hair sticking out of the covers on the teen's bed. When neither of the boys so much as acknowledge him he clears his throat gently. The sound startles his nephew into dropping one of his tools and lets out a yelp of surprise. On the bed Midoriya throws himself from under the covers groggily.

"Was happ'n," he slurs, squinting around the room. His hair is a mess of curls, yellow All Might hoodie a stark contrast against the room's white walls.

"Did you have to scare me like that?" Reo asks him with wide eyes.

Naomasa is borderline exhausted but he still finds it in himself to laugh at the state of the two boys. "Sorry about waking you up, Midoriya. I didn't realize you were staying over."

Izuku rubs at his eyes. "Detective?"

Reo picks his screwdriver back up, setting it aside for the moment. "Another long night?" the teen asks him as Midoriya tries waking up a bit more.

"You could say that," he sighs. "Well I'll leave you to it. I know it's spring break but don't stay up too late, Reo."

The teen waves him off with a grin. "Yeah, yeah. I'll see you in the morning."

"Goodnight you two."

"Night."

Midoriya attempts some form of goodnight that comes out nearly incomprehensible as he falls back into the bed. He waits for the sound of the door closing before he speaks again. "How long was I asleep?" he mutters.

"Probably thirty minutes," Reo sighs, turning back to the blueprints he has laid out.

“So it's not even midnight?”

“Nope.”

Midoriya throws an arm over his face. “Wake me up in an hour,” he mumbles, already halfway to falling back asleep.

“What about an hour and a half?”

Midoriya only grunts in response.

Spring break has changed more than just Midoriya’s patrol times. This much is obvious when the vigilante spies none other than Eraserhead perched atop a nearby building. It’s obvious that the man is part of Musutafu’s most recent manhunt for the latest unlucky criminal. The occasional police lights illuminate the surrounding streets as Midoriya slips behind an air unit a few rooftops over, hiding himself. The vigilante was fortunate to have escaped that first time he met the hero.

He doubts he’ll be so lucky in a second encounter.

Izuku figures that with Eraserhead on the scene they’ll have no problem catching whoever it is they’re after without him. This probably would have been true if Midoriya hadn’t stumbled across the guy as the vigilante was trying to disappear further into the city.

They two of them freeze, staring at each other from separate ends of the alley they’ve found themselves in. Maybe they both could have gone their separate ways peaceably if they didn’t recognize each other.

Midoriya curses, letting out a deep sigh. He leans against his staff, suddenly tired.

“Keep your mouth shut and I won’t hurt you,” the man tells him, pointing a pocket knife he’d pulled out at the boy. “ I saw you fighting those pathetic excuses of heroes. If you barely managed to beat them then you won’t beat me.”

Midoriya stiffens at the words, gritting his teeth.

“Weak. Always too weak when it really counts,” the voice in his head chuckles. The boy pushes it to the side. He can’t dwell on it. The past

is too far gone. The only thing he can do now is become stronger.

He tries to hold this thought in his head. It's a difficult thing to do.

"My quirk is meant for maiming." The man grins, shifting his stance. "It's a bit much so I was avoiding using it, but if you're gonna try to stop me then I won't be afraid to use it."

Midoriya scowls. He's heard about this man through osmosis on several of the online forums he frequents. And though he can't remember the man's name, he certainly wasn't bluffing about his quirk. *Blood bending,* he recalls. He truly *wasn't* a match for this man. But, he does know who is.

He'd barely escaped the hero's notice earlier. But, with sirens still whining in search of the man before him, Midoriya thinks it's the perfect time to draw his attention.

Piper raises his hands in surrender. "You're right," the boy says. "I wouldn't be able to beat you."

The criminal lets out a sharp bark of laughter. "Seems you're smarter than I thought."

The vigilante switches over the voice setting on his mask and lets out a high pitched scream of desperation. "Help! Help! Villain! There's a villain!"

The criminal stares at him with widening eyes as Midoriya grins behind his mask. The vigilante slips the grappling hook from his belt and throws it up towards the nearest rooftop. He lets out another scream as he feels it catch against the ledge. The man takes a furious step forward, trying to get within range to use his quirk on the boy.

"Help! Help me!"

There's a distant shout of, "This way!" that distracts the other long enough for Midoriya to begin his ascent up the building. He lets Reo's tech do most of the work, the retractable cordage also helping drag him up the building faster.

"Villain! Villain!" he cries over his shoulder. From this position Midoriya can see police rushing down the street, headed directly towards their location. He watches as the man tries to run out the opposite end of the alley only to be cut off by a set of glowing crimson eyes glinting behind a set of slitted yellow goggles.

The vigilante hauls himself over the lip of the building before he can be seen, switching his voice setting back and tucking the grappling hook into his belt. He peaks cautiously over the roof's ledge, watching as the criminal struggles with Eraserhead's capture weapon and three police officers storm down from the other end of the alley.

The hero's eyes trail up the sides of the buildings, leaving Piper to drive beneath what protection the roof offers. The boy's heart roars.

They'd made eye contact.

As soon as the man is in cuffs Eraserhead drags himself up the side of the building with his capture weapon, chasing the afterimage of someone he hopes he doesn't recognize. But, by the time he makes it to the top, the head he'd seen peeking down at him is nothing but a shadow leaping off the otherside of the rooftop.

Midoriya tries his best not to look down as he jumps the gap between buildings, focusing on where he's landing instead. Behind him Eraserhead hauls himself over the edge of the previous roof, scarf falling gently back around his shoulders. He immediately takes off after the boy without another word, eyes lit up red as soon as he catches sight of the vigilante. His hair rises around his ears.

The flash of a silver staff is all the hero needs to confirm his thoughts on the figure's identity.

Aizawa grunts, as he leaps the alley between buildings. He throws his scarf out to stop the vigilante but quickly retracks it as the teen takes another running jump from the building.

For Midoriya the next building over is lower than the last, but he has no time to hesitate with Eraserhead tailing him. He tosses his staff towards the other roof before leaping the gap between buildings. He hits the roof hard, joints protesting as he forces himself into a roll. He stumbles back up, scrambling for where his staff landed before setting off again.

His heart pounds relentlessly in his chest, threatening to choke him.

He needs to get back on the streets. Even if there was a possibility of running into more heroes or police, there are also more places to hide. It slows him down, but he takes the chance. Scrambling down the nearest firescape.

Eraserhead catches up to him in the alley.

It was only ever a matter of time if Midoriya is being honest with himself, but the fact still manages to catch him off guard. The hero sends his scarf out, wrapping it around the vigilante's ankle and Midoriya hits the ground hard. He catches himself with his hands, but the fall sends his staff skittering away from him.

The hero pulls at his capture weapon, dragging the teen closer. Piper kicks at it, catching it with the spikes of his boots but it's not enough to even begin severing it.

He curses, trying to think of a solution.

"Never too late to become a killer," the voice cackles. *"The ones who try to spare another's life will always be at a disadvantage."* Sharp teeth glint in his mind's eye.

Midoriya pushes the thought away in disgust.

The vigilante scrambles for one of the escrima sticks at his side, thinking fast. He flips the small switch at the bottom before the hero's weapon whips out, pulling it out of his grasp. "I've heard my students gossiping one too many times about your little taser sticks to fall for that, kid."

Eraserhead grabs it, studying it beneath the barely there light before he slips it into his belt for safe keeping. Midoriya rolls over, hiding as his other hand reaches for the second stick.

Despite the situation Midoriya dons a wobbly smile beneath his mask. He doesn't think he's been able to use this specific feature yet. The vigilante presses the button on the handle, weapon crackling with electricity. He grins because the one he holds isn't the only one to go off.

Aizawa flinches violently, caught off guard by the sudden jolt of electricity sent into his side.

The grip on his ankle lightens and Midoriya uses the chance to push himself up and aim a sloppy heel kick at the hero that he easily dodges. He presses down on the button again. The one in his hand crackles uselessly, but Eraserhead curses, discarding the weapon still stuck in his belt. He tosses it down the alley out of the boy's reach, but it's not the escrima stick that Piper needs.

He pulls the pin from a smoke grenade, coloring the alley a vibrant red as the vigilante turns away from the hero and instead lunges for his staff. He's barely able to get a hold of it before Eraserhead is dragging him back blindly by the ankle. It nearly sweeps him off his feet as it forces him to hop forward stupidly, but with his staff back in his hands he uses it to put more distance between them. The capture weapon slackens as he swings his staff out like a bat, but hits something metallic rather than flesh. The collision rings out like a crashing cymbal, jarring his arms.

It was true Eraserhead wouldn't be able to see, but neither would Piper. But, that was a risk the fifteen-year-old would have to take.

The hero sends out another strand of his weapon through the smoke that Midoriya manages to bat away with his staff, letting it wrap around the pipe instead. He uses it to pull the man further into the smoke, using his capture weapon against him. A dark figure shifts in the fog ahead of him and Midoriya aims a swing of his staff towards what he assumes is the hero's chin but hits glides through nothing but smoke.

There's a sharp tug on his ankle as the capture weapon retracts from the end of his staff. Piper lunges forward, following the retreating path of the scarf. He swipes out diagonally like he's wielding a katana.

There's a shuffle of feet and a milk crate comes flying from his right, capture weapon slamming it into his bicep. He grits his teeth as the hero emerges from the smoke. His eyes are a blazing crimson, hair rising around his face.

An idea comes to the boy suddenly.

Eraserhead sends another strand of his weapon out and Midoriya does his best to fend it off. He waits till he feels that sharp jerk at his ankle again before enacting his plan.

It's obvious that the move is meant to just throw him off balance. He stumbles forward, planting the trapped ankle harshly back on the concrete.

This moment would make or break his performance.

Midoriya bends his ankle out, pushing nearly to its breaking point. It's just enough to *look* bad without actually incapacitating himself.

The boy lets outs a sharp cry of pain, knees buckling beneath him as

he collapses onto his side. He curls up around his ‘injured’ ankle as if protecting it.

Eraserhead emerges cautiously from the red haze, studying him carefully. “Seems you're not as impervious to pain as people seem to think if that's all it takes to floor you.” The capture weapon slowly unwinds from his ankle, curling back around its owner.

The smoke is clearing, revealing more of their surroundings.

The vigilante rolls himself shakily to his knees, grabbing at his staff to help him stand, acting the part of someone who’s injured. The hero sighs, watching him struggle to limp away. “Give it up, kid. If you broke it then you’ll just make it worse trying to get away.”

The vigilante takes note of the dumpster to his left and his first escrima stick laying a few feet in front of him. He pretends to stumble.

“Kid.” His quiet footsteps draw closer.

But, the *kid* releases another smoke bomb, blue this time.

Eraserhead’s quick to react, capture weapon lashing out at him from the thickening smoke. Izuku scrambles for the grappling hook, tossing it up towards the nearest rooftop. There's a clang of metal at it latches to the top of the fire escape. Instead of climbing it he leaves it to hang there and tosses his pipe to cover the sound of quietly hauling himself into the dumpster.

Izuku holds his breath, not daring to make even the slightest movement in fear of discovery.

He hears the hero curse softly upon discovering the rope. “Up again, problem child? You’re getting faster.” There’s a quiet creak of metal that tells the boy Eraserhead’s latched onto the fire escape with his capture weapon and a grunt of effort as he hauls himself up.

Midoriya doesn't stay in the dumpster for long, fearing that the hero might return if he doesn't find him on the roof. Jumping in here had been a huge risk in itself. There’d have been no way out if he was found, but if he'd continued on there's no doubt that he would've eventually been caught again.

He pulls himself just as quietly out of the dumpster, collecting his scattered gear and doing his best to make his way home unnoticed.

He camps out in an old warehouse on his way back for an hour just to make sure he's not being tailed before finally slinking up his apartment's balcony and falling into bed.

"Maybe a knife wouldn't be a bad investment," he murmurs into his pillow, remembering Eraserhead's capture weapon. "Just a small one."

The next day dawns with Reo grinning at him from the otherside of the Midoriyas' front door. "Of all the times you've been to my place, this is the first time I've been to yours." At Midoriya's confused look he offers the boy an explanation, "Your mom invited us for a late lunch." His grin widens at Izuku's disheveled appearance. "Just wake up?"

He nods dumbly. Inko had woken him up only twenty minute ago, telling him with a gentle smile to get dressed. He had figured she wanted to take him somewhere, but had been proven wrong when a knock had sounded at their door.

Reo's mother appears behind the teen, smiling softly. "Hi Midoriya. Nice to see you again."

The boy stutters out a hello as he steps aside, letting the two in.

"Sorry my brother couldn't come, he's been busy with work recently."

"That's fine," Izuku coughs to cover the cracking of his voice.

Inko peeks around the corner from the kitchen, bright smile in place. "Are they here?" she asks before spying their guests and slipping down the hall. "Oh, it's so nice to finally meet you, Tsukauchi-san!" Inko says, clasping the woman's gloved hands between her own.

"I should be saying the same thing."

Inko turns back to her son. "Sorry, honey. I meant to wake you up earlier but you were sleeping so well. I didn't want to bother you." She begins fixing some of his curls to his embarrassment before his friend intervenes.

"Did we shock you?" Reo says with a grin, drawing his attention. "Your mom said she wanted it to be a surprise," he laughs.

They all move towards the kitchen.

Inko tears up when he introduces Reo to her as his friend and he

brings her into a hug with a laugh. “I'm sorry. Sorry,” she snivles, waving off their concern. “It's just… I'm so happy to see that you're happy, honey.” She pats at her tears with a napkin, trying to compose herself.

Misaki offers her a soft, kindly smile. “You're not the only one Midoriya-san. I think they're really good for each other.”

Good for each other? Midoriya thinks. *He's saved my life more times than I can remember. He's good for me, but I can't say I’m good for him.*

Reo elbows him painfully in the side as if he knows exactly what the boy’s thinking. *I would've gone insane in that apartment all by myself,* is what his eyes say. Midoriya doesn't know how much he believes it, but he can't help reciprocating the smile he throws at him.

The two boys are tasked with setting the table as the women move towards the stove, helping each other finish the last of the cooking.

“How did my mom even set this up?.” Izuku asks in a hushed whisper, watching the mothers work. “I know for a fact that I don’t have Tsukauchi-san’s number and I know you don’t have my mom’s.”

“I honestly don't know and at this I’m too scared to ask,” Reo breathes. They share a concerned look from across the table.

Inko grins at them over her shoulder. “Food's done!”

There's a mess of quiet chatter as the four of them eat. Chopsticks clinking against plates and bowls and the murmur of the two women as they talk about their jobs. Eventually Misaki looks up at Izuku from across the table. “You're starting high school soon, Midoriya-kun? Where did you decide you're going? I know you were talking about hero schools last time.”

“Ah…” Midoriya trails off, tensing against his will. He across the table glances at Reo, the older teen’s eyes asking if he’s okay. “It is. But I'll just be going into their general education course.”

Misaki arches her brow, smile on her lips. Her interest is genuine and somehow that makes the conversation that much more painful. “What school is it?” She looks between him and Inko.

Inko beams at her proudly. “He got into UA.”

Across from him Reo immediately begins choking on his food, staring

up at Midoriya. His eyes are the widest he's ever seen them go. Misaki slaps him on the back a few times to help him recover. “UA?” he croaks.

It's then that Midoriya realizes the mistake he'd made. He told Reo about getting rejected from the hero course, but never anything more than that. He feels himself flush with embarrassment. In his defense it had been a hard topic to broach at the time, not to mention the events that had unfolded soon after.

“So you'll be able to see Reo everyday then!” Misaki grins, glancing between the two boys.

This time it's Midoriya's turn to stare at his friend, wide eyed and frozen as the words sink in. There's a look in the other's eyes that says ‘*we're talking about this later’* and Izuku can’t help but agree.

Misaki ignores their starting contest, plowing the conversation onwards as she turns to look at Inko. “It's a really great school. I've never had to worry about Reo while he's been there. It’s a really safe place.” She glances at her son. “Aside from the occasional phone call about him blowing something up in the support lab,” she laughs.

“That wasn't my fault!” Reo splutters, “Someone swapped out the fuel in my canisters with some homemade garbage they were trying to test out!”

“Right, right.”

Midoriya can't stop himself from laughing.

Their lunch ends peacefully, Inko busy distributing leftovers as the two boys work at washing the dishes.

“So, school, huh?” Reo laughs tensely, side eyeing their mothers.

The younger teen huffs. “How long have we known each other for me not to know that you're in the *UA* support course?” Izuku whisper-shouts as they finish drying the last few dishes, bumping hips with Reo.

“Well I could say the same to you,” the teen hisses as they slip away to Midoriya’s room. “When were you gonna tell me you got into UA?”

Midoriya pushes open the door to his room, ignoring with a hushed embarrassment the mountain of All Might merchandise plastered around the room. “It was a touchy subject,” Izuku mutters, “I still don’t even like thinking about it for too long. It's not like I *want* to be in general education. But, I couldn't bring myself to give up on my dream school.”

“That's understandable.” Reo sighs, finally taking a moment to glance around the bedroom. “You know I wasn't expecting your room to look like this, but now that I’m here I’m not surprised.”

Midoriya flushes. “I told you I like heroes.”

“That’s why I’m not surprised,” he laughs. There’s a shadow box above the boy’s desk that has the signed Piper mask hanging in it. Reo grins at it. “What’d your mom say about that?”

“I told her I ran into him on my way home from school,” Izuku huffs, plopping down on his bed.

“Reo.” Misaki raps gently against the door, easing it open. “Sorry to cut you both short, but it's time to head out. We’re supposed to meet your grandparents later.” Izuku can see her eyeing his All Might posters with a rising smile. “It was good seeing you again Midoriya.”

Izuku rises from his spot along with Reo, offering her an embarrassed smile. “You too Tsukauchi-san.”

Inko meets them in the hall.

“It was so nice meeting you two.” She smiles at their guests. “Especially you, Tsukauchi-kun. Thank you for being friends with Izuku.” Midoriya can see the woman tearing up again.

“Mom,” he laughs, pulling her into another hug.

“I don’t think I’ve ever said it,” Misaki speaks up, drawing everyone's eyes. “But, I feel the same way as her, Midoriya-kun.”

Izuku doesn’t think he’s really been that great of a friend to the older teen. He’s put him through far more than he should have. Midoriya might be the one that comes in with cuts and bruises and he might be the one who had *died,* but in doing so he *hurt* Reo. That much has always been certain no matter how much Izuku tries to drown it out at times. Reo has been there for all of it and continues to let Midoriya cling to him despite the bruises his desperate hands leave behind.

“You don’t deserve him,” the voice in his head whispers.

And Midoriya agrees with it, but Reo is still here, still standing before him. He’s thanking Inko for the food and smiling brighter than Izuku’s seen him smile in a long time. Midoriya doesn’t deserve a friend like him. But, Reo has never cared about what Izuku deserves.

Chapter End Notes

So I'm trying to get back onto an updating schedule now that I have more time on my hands so we'll see how this goes! The next chapter will be the start of UA! I tried to fit into this chapter but it's already almost a thousand words over than it usually is and it was getting late so prepare yourself for the next chapter! Things are about to start heating up!! Thank you for all the love and support on the last chapter! I do read all of the comment even if I don't respond to them they always manage to brighten my day so thank you for all your kind words!!! I'll try to start responding to them all again idk why I've been struggling to adskjlfhjadlskf

I posted some art on the Tumblr a few days ago with Reo in his UA uniform so if you saw that then you probably guessed what was gonna happen asdkfjdlsak i debated posting it just yet and decided I didn't want to wait so some of you all got a sneak peak aksdjflsadjf
We also finally got to see Aizawa again! He's gonna be more important in upcoming chapters so get ready, that Dadizawa tag is finally gonna start kicking in asdkjfhasdjlkf and we got a bit of a heart to heart with Naomasa as well so I hope you all enjoyed that!

But! Until next time make sure you check out the tumblr or dm for a link to the discord! We always love to see new faces □□□

(Also thank you for helping me edit this chapter as usual Avery ily □□□)

Bolide

Chapter Summary

> In which the author begins running out of chapter names and must turn to google.

Chapter Notes

> TW:// mentions of suicide

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart!!!!

Polystained

Woshuto x x

sunnybunny200

AveryArts13

blackholeca

Midoriya struggles to tie his tie in the mirror. Grunting when it continues to come out sloppy. He has no doubts that his peers will be judging him enough without his tie looking like it does.

His clothes are a little big on him, but they'll give him room to grow in coming years.

The boy was attending UA through a partial scholarship on behalf of his placement in the entrance exam. But, even then tuition was not cheap and neither were their uniforms. They couldn't afford for him to grow out of his clothes too quickly.

He checks the time.

He'll miss the train if he doesn't leave soon. He gives up on the tie, grabbing his backpack and slipping out of his room to find Inko waiting for him.

She's already crying.

Izuku smiles at her softly, bringing her into a hug as soon as she's in range. “You're all grown up,” she weeps, chin tucked over his shoulder.

He gently squeezes her before pulling away. “Love you, Mom.”

The woman fiddles his uniform, flattening out wrinkles and straightening his sloppily tied tie. “You're gonna do great,” she mutters, more to herself than him. She meets his eyes once more. “Oh～” she whispers, wrapping him in a tight hug. “I love you too, Sweety.”

After that he's tugging on his shoes and rushing down their apartment steps with one last goodbye. In his pocket his phone buzzes

Reo 〉

Text Message

Today 6:52 AM

Train should be at your stop soon

make sure ur not late

Im comingdhfhd

Izuku picks up his pace, running nearly full sprint now towards the train station. He makes it just in time to see it pull up, Reo stepping out among the crowd looking for him. It feels weird to see him donning a UA uniform and Midoriya wonders just how strange it must be for his friend to see Pied Piper in a matching one.

Reo laughs at his disheveled appearance once they make it close enough to talk. “What did you do to your tie?”

“I tried my best,” Midoriya whines back, following the other onto the train, doors sliding shut behind them.

“Well you’ve gotta be careful, you know? Depending on your teacher, your best could get you a detention for a dress code violation.”

Midoriya’s eyes widen. “Are you serious?”

Reo grins at him. “Mostly. If you were in the business department you'd definitely be dead.”

They sway gently as the train pulls away, speeding towards their destination.

Midoriya can feel his nerves growing as they near the school. With each stop more people in UA uniforms join in, cramming into their car.

Would UA be like Aldera? Would he experience the same pain at the hands of different people?

Reo has been talking to him the whole ride and at first Midoriya was easily keeping up with the conversation. But, as they draw closer to the school of his dreams his replies become less and less frequent until he simply stops talking all together.

He stares out one of the windows numbly, the world outside blurring into nothing but a haze of colors.

“Useless Deku, taking the spot of someone who deserves it more. You’re aiming too far, too high,” the voice in his head laughs, the faces of many sneering at him from the inky swells of the ocean that rests just below his sun. *“Little Icarius with wax wings you crafted yourself. The laws of gravity states that those who cannot fly will fall. It's best to give up now.”*

Reo nudges him with a gentle smile. They’ve reached their stop.

He follows Tsukauchi off the train like a zombie, too lost in his thoughts to really take notice of the things around him. He brushes shoulders with strangers in the crowd, numbly following the design of Reo's backpack.

His friend says something, but his words drown beneath the thoughts in his head. Reo takes a hold of his shoulders, grounding him. “You're going to be fine.”

Midoriya feels some of the tension leave him. It's certainly not all of it and his thoughts continue to writhe against the insides of his skull, but it brings him back to reality enough to recognize the UA gates in front of him.

The gates are ones designed to defend the school from any intruders and yet they will let him pass right through. This is the birthplace of heroes and Pied Piper is the enemy of their constitution. Walking in feels like some sort of trap, like the students around him will suddenly be aware of who he really is.

Will they notice? Will they notice that he's their enemy?

How could he convince them otherwise?

But, he catches Reo grinning at him as brightly as the sun in his chest. It's infectious and Midoriya can't stop himself from smiling right back.

He's at *UA*. He's attending *UA*.

This feels like a new beginning. Not just for the vigilante, but for his friend as well. In the face of UA's looming shadow and its sparkling windows all the world's trouble seems to melt away.

There's no one here that needs saving.

Reo leads him through the gates and they do not shut him out.

They're still pretty early getting to school and with time to spare Reo takes to showing him around a few places. They make stops at the lunchroom and the support department, peeking inside the development studio with sly grins. There are more people in the halls now and it isn't until then that Midoriya realizes just how big the school actually is and just how many students attend UA. "Each tower is usually dedicated to their own departments, though there is some overflow from time to time," Reo explains, finally leading the way to general education classrooms.

Just like the support room door, the ones for gen ed. tower above him. From the windows looking in he can see that some of his classmates have already gathered.

His walk around the school managed to release much of the tension he'd felt earlier. But now that he's being faced with who would perhaps become some of his potential abusers it all comes flooding back. He thinks he hides it well but Reo bumps his shoulder gently in support.

Reo doesn't know about the bullying though. It isn't something

Midoriya has talked about with anyone, his friend included. It feels like an embarrassing secret and he wanted to keep it locked behind Aldera's classroom doors.

The teen steels himself as Reo leaves and finally pushes the door to class 1-C open. Most everyone is talking rather animatedly, obviously just as excited to be at UA as he was coming in. A few people remain quietly at their desks, some look nervous, others broody, one towards the back of the room looks like he's actually asleep.

"Surrounded by the people who's futures are brighter than yours. Whose spot did you steal to get here?"

Izuku quietly takes a seat at the desk with his name on it, sitting down just in front of the sleeping boy.

He resists the urge to pick at his hands and instead studies the calluses, symbols of his hard work. He rubs at them, tracing circles. He didn't take anyone's place, he had carved his own spot here and these calluses on his hands and the bags beneath his eyes were proof of this.

He'd been out patrolling late last night. Anxiety pushed him to continue patrolling later than usual and in the end he'd barely managed to get home before four.

"Good morning little listeners!"

Midoriya jerks back at the booming voice, most of his classmates doing the same. A few let out startled noises and he can hear chair legs of the boy behind screech as he recoils. Midoriya looks up to find none other than Present Mic walking towards the teacher's podium and his eyes widen significantly. Izuku knew from the beginning that UA's staff was made up of almost entirely pro heroes. And yet here he is, still attempting to graduate just beneath their noses. He's met and fought with at least two of the teaching staff and with his continued vigilantism he has no doubt that number will grow.

Present Mic is dressed in his hero clothes, hair spiked back like that of a cockatoo and smile as bright as his attitude. It relieves some of his tension and at the same time multiples it. "My name is Yamada Hizashi and I'm going to be your hometown teacher so let's get along. Everybody say, Yeah!"

There's a few excited responses around the room.

“Alright! We’ll do some quick introductions and then we'll head over to the auditorium! How's that sound?” The man points at one of the students in front, asking them to introduce themselves.

Midoriya’s heart drops when they state both their name and their quirk. Everyone at Aldera knew he was quirkless. He required no introduction. UA was a different story. Only two people here knew him by name. One would keep his secret, the other was likely to shout it the moment he was within eyesight.

They make their way slowly around the room, some people stating only the names of their quirks while others give short explanations. The girl in front of him introduces herself as having an adhesive quirk, quickly explaining it before all eyes finally turn towards him.

He swallows the rising dead in his throat. “My name's Midoriya Izuku.” This is where he ends his introduction. They didn't have to know yet. They didn't have to know he’s, "*weak, quirkless, a deku,”* the voice in his head supplies.

They would find out on their own eventually. He didn't have to tell them.

There's a short, awkward silence as they wait for him to continue speaking, but Yamada saves him from their stares, looking towards the boy behind him. “Next?”

Midoriya can feel anxiety threatening to choke him as he turns to see the boy behind him, content to merely watch the violet-haired teen from the corner of his eye. Izuku is surprised to find that he also simply introduces himself by his name and wonders if the kid dozed off again while the rest of the class was talking.

“I'm Shinsou Hitoshi.”

There's another awkward pause after that, but their teacher is ready for it this time, motioning for the student at the start of the next row to begin. They introduce themselves along with their quirk.

Things go smoothly from there, ending just as easily as they had started and Present Mic leads them out of the classroom a few minutes later as they head towards the auditorium. Several of his classmates cast him curious glances and he's sure the Shinsou boy is no different. More than a person with an interesting quirk, the unknown, the forcibly hidden, draws attention like a dead carcass draws flies.

They're joined in the hall by another class filing out and a low murmur starts as the people around him begin talking.

“-didn't think they'd give gen ed. hero teachers.”

“Wish we could've gotten seats closer together.”

“–ust kinda feel like the illusion got shattered, ya’ know?” Midoriya’s ears prick, tuning into the conversation just ahead of him. “I started watching some of the lesser known videos of him to try and get the whole picture and it's not as great as I used to think. He's supposed to help the heroes, not hurt them.”

Izuku tenses, stride stuttering. The sudden realization of what his classmates are probably discussing hits him.

“He's still really cool though,” another voice chimes in, feigning a few poor punches. He laughs, “I'll never get over that video of him tasing that dude in the ween.” Midoriya chokes as the original speaker elbows his friend in the side with a frown. “Come on, admit it. You one hundred percent laughed at that,” the friend says.

“I winced sympathetically.”

“You also laughed.”

There's a moment where neither says anything before the boy finally agrees. “…I did also laugh…”

“See!”

Despite the start of the conversation a small smile twitches at the corners of Midoriya’s lips. If he's being honest, Izuku feels like garbage. Every time his tension so much as eases in the slightest it's always soon to come back tenfold. He wants to be happy, wants to be excited. He's at UA. He made it into UA. He should feel unstoppable.

But the word ‘unstoppable’ feels like a curse at the tip of his tongue. Where as soon as it's spoken all of his secrets will be exposed. Fear is also tucked just beneath his skin. He needs to avoid Eraserhead and Snipe, needs to avoid everyone who could possibly see through him. All it takes is one person with a suitable quirk. At Aldera he had the alibi of a quirkless kid. At UA he had no such luxury, not yet at least.

Maybe if everyone knew. Maybe if I just told them.

“Tell them what?” His head cackles, *“That you're weak, useless, a deku?”*

His flesh boils and his eyes flash with the light of a thousand blue stars. “I'm not useless,” Midoriya hisses hotly, voice easily lost in the crowd. His sun flares in his chest, determination and pure spite fueling it. He needs to prove everyone wrong. The part of his mind that still chants *"useless doll ”* at him in his classmates’ voices has to be proven wrong.

UA’s auditorium is already filled to brim with students from every department by the time their class arrives. He manages to snag a seat at the end of one of the rows next to the girl who's desk sits in front of him. He's already forgotten her name but remembers her mentioning an adhesive quirk.

Behind him he can hear what he assumes are second years talking to each other. “—missing a hero class again. Always think they're better than us.”

“Did you expect any different?” their friend huffs, “I kind of feel bad for them though. We'll be lucky to even see half of that class still intact by tomorrow. I heard that teacher expelled the entirety of the last first year class he was in charge of.”

“I thought that was just a rumor?”

“No way,” they scoff. “One of my brothers was in his second year here when it happened. The whole school went crazy.”

Midoriya searches the auditorium, it seems most of the school has finally gathered. But, there's an empty section of seats towards the middle of the room where he assumes the missing hero class should be. He doesn’t see Bakugou’s spiked blonde hair anywhere and wonders if he might fall victim to whoever this rumored teacher is. He half laughs, *that’d be ironic. The boy born to be a hero expelled from UA while the quirkless loser attends in his place.*

Izuku’s eyes roam unseeingly across the crowd.

“In his place?” his head hisses, *“You've been left to rot in general education for the next three years.”*

He catches Reo waving at him from across the room and smiles. From this distance he's thankful that the teen can't see it doesn't quite reach

his eyes.

"'In his place'," the voice laughs. *"You'll never set foot inside a hero classroom."*

Midoriya feels his chest tighten, fingers quivering. He wants to say something to rebuke it, but it's not wrong. His nails dig into the fabric of his pants.

"Good morning students!" The words break him out of his head, drawing his eye to what has to be UA's famed rodent-like principal perched on top of the shoulder of a displeased looking Vlad King. There's a variety of other heroes gathered on the stage that he managed to miss entering, Midnight, Snipe, Cementos, Ectoplasm, Power Loader, Hound Dog, and Present Mic are just the ones he recognizes immediately. "For many of you this will be your first day here and for that I would like to offer my congratulations for making it this far. And for our returning students I welcome you back to what will hopefully be another great year. Since UA's founding we have striven for greatness from the next generation to ensure that the ones who come after us will have a future brighter than ours."

"What is that supposed to be?" the girl beside him mutters with a laugh. "The mascot or something?"

Midoriya has a sinking feeling as the person sitting on the other side of her snickers as well.

"UA prides itself on our students and staff so I will be expecting great things from everyone this year. To our seniors I wish you luck in your final year here, counselors will be making rounds in the coming weeks to discuss your plans for the future, but they are always available if you wish to talk with them outside of these meetings. To our second years, congratulations on making it through your first year here at UA. I know it must've been hard, but please keep up the good work. Graduation will come sooner than you expect it. And to our first years and transferring students, welcome to UA. Upperclassmen please be kind to them as they're figuring out the building and help them where you can. I hope this will be another great school year for us all. Everyone in this auditorium is the future of not only this country, but of this world. I look forward to getting to know you all."

There's a round of applause that goes up and Vlad King sets the principal back on his feet. Yamada takes the mic as all of the other teachers file off stage. He explains a few of the more mundane things

about the upcoming year in his overly animated way, dates for midterms and finals as well as the ones for festivals and parent-teacher conferences. Eventually he ends it all out with another loud, “Yeah!” before letting the third years leave first. The noise levels rise as soon as he finishes, neighbors whispering to neighbors about the start of classes. Who will teach what? What is the lunch food like? Do they really have to take p.e. if they're only in general education?

Reo makes a beeline for him as the third years file out, squeezing through the crowd. “So who's your home room teacher?” he asks without preamble.

Midoriya smiles. “Present Mic. He scared just about everyone when he came in. I know his quirk amplifies his voice, but I wonder if he has any trouble controlling it outside of hero work.”

Reo laughs at the sudden analysis, apologizing to another third year as they step past. “Of course that's your immediate response. But, Present Mic’s always pretty loud. He's an energetic character though so it makes sense.” His friend glances around at the retreating crowd. “All right I'll see you at lunch. Remember I'll meet you outside your classroom so don't wander off and get lost.”

“I wander around Musutafu for fun and you’re worried about me getting lost in a school?” Izuku laughs, watching as his friend gets pulled away by the crowd.

“I still get lost trying to find the bathroom sometimes!” The girl next to Midoriya snickers and he has to hold back a frown for his friend's sake. They wave at each other once out of earshot until Reo disappears out the door. It's another minute or two before Present Mic calls for the second years to head out, and then even longer before his year is allowed out. He doesn’t exactly remember where he’s headed, but it’s easy enough to follow the shock of bobbing lilac hair down the hall.

Reo’s presence had offered a small respite from the thoughts in his head, but in his absence his mind turns in on itself once again. He’s trying to distract himself with mundane things, the weather, the walls, the ceiling. In a moment of need he tries to recite his class schedule, but can’t even remember the one they’re supposed to have first. He’s sure he must have looked over his schedule at least thirty different times over the last two weeks and the fact that he can’t remember it

feels like it'll drive him mad. *Was it science? Math?* He remembers it being something he wasn't looking forward to taking so early in the morning.

There's a whisper to the side of him that he hangs onto. "I hear we're sharing some teachers with the hero department."

"Really?" another student asks, obviously surprised. Midoriya stiffens a bit at the news.

"Yeah. I had a cousin that used to go here and they said the school usually doubles up teachers between departments. That was a few years ago though, so I don't know if it'll hold up anymore."

"Wouldn't that be so cool though?" their friend laughs. "To be learning from the same teachers as like, future heroes?"

"I don't think it's as cool as you're making it out to be," someone else chimes in, "Most of the teachers here are heroes anyway right?"

"Right! Can you believe that we have Present Mic as our homeroom teacher? I used to listen to all of his podcasts up until like last year and now he's one of my teachers!"

The first girl laughs. "I just hope he's not always as loud as he was this morning. My quirk makes my ears kind of sensitive."

He thinks the kid behind him is asleep again and is debating following suit just to get out of his head until Cementos slips into the room carrying a large book labeled Modern Literature.

"My name is Ishiyama Ken, I will be your Modern Literature teacher. I hope we can all get along." He sets his book down on the podium with a quiet thud. Midoriya can tell it's custom made for him by the ease with which he opens it, concrete fingers never scrambling for purchase. He looks up briefly. "I'll call roll then."

Cementos' lesson only manages to keep him occupied for a short time before his mind begins wandering to darker things. He remembers the nightmares he's had about this building, the ones that aren't so easy to forget. He lost track of just how many times he's jerked awake after falling from its heights.

"Jump. Jump!" The voice in his head chants with the voices of many.

“Take a swan dive off the roof! See if your wax wings will hold up!” it laughs.

Cementos writes down something on the board and Midoriya numbly jots it down in his notes. He needs to pay attention, he needs to focus. This was literature, this was UA, this was first period. He couldn’t afford to fail his classes before he’d barely begun them. This place was his last hope, even if the hope he clings to is small and fragile sometimes it feels like the only thing he has left.

Second period fares no better in keeping his attention than the last, especially after none other than Snipe walks in ready to teach them history. The hero's appearance had sent him spiraling into thoughts of being found out, of being recognized. There are two guns hanging at his side and Midoriya can’t help from tensing when he notices them. He'd done that. He's the reason there's an extra one there. Which one is the one he had? Which one laid under his bed for weeks on end?

Midoriya barely manages to recover his thoughts by the end of the class, having only written down a few notes from the end of the lecture.

Snipe glances away from the board at the sounding of the bell. “Alright, I think you all are set for P.E. next.” He packs up his things, nodding at them. “I’ll be seeing everyone tomorrow then.”

Midoriya gets an immediate sense of relief as soon as Snipe leaves, conversation in the classroom resuming as everyone gets ready for the next class. They animatedly about what they'll be doing next.

Psychical activity was something Midoriya was immediately familiar with so he hopes it will be enough to ease his nerves. It was something he was forced to pay attention to. If there was anything that could keep his thoughts at bay it was a little bit of physical exertion.

The door to their classroom slides open again and conversation slowly dies out once again. The teacher walks towards the podium, introducing himself without preamble.

“My name is Aizawa Shouta. I'll be your p.e. teacher. I’m not always going to be your p.e. teacher, usually it's whoever is available.” He buries the lower half of his face in his capture weapon, dark eyes calculating as he looks over the students. “Unfortunately, I’m the one that’s usually available. You’ll find your gym uniforms over there,

please put them on in the locker rooms and meet me at ground beta in ten minutes."

Midoriya wonders if it's too late to give up on attending UA.

Chapter End Notes

> Thank you all so much for your continued support! It's been a long time and a lot of words but we finally made it to UA! But no I will not apologize for the ending akdjsfhksjldfad that was a last minute addition and I do not regret it whatsoever dksjfhasjf Originally I meant to get to the end of the day but by the time I even got to lunch it was over five thousand words and then I made Aizawa the p.e. teacher and it got even longer so I just 😶 snip snip adlkjfalsdk Anyways I hope you all enjoyed this chapter I meant to post it yesterday but got sidetracked and didn't get it finished. I think I'm going to be aiming to start updating on Tuesdays again so please look forward to it! Until next time!

Chandrasekhar Limit

Chapter Notes

TW:// mentions of suicide

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Midoriya's nervous to be changing in front of his new classmates. At Aldera everyone always averted their eyes, assuming his scars were the marks of bullying. There's a constellation of scars on his back, a mixture of bullying and his early vigilante days. There's a few scattering his arms and legs and a small one that stays hidden just beneath his bangs.

He wonders if he'll be labeled a delinquent by his peers. He can feel the stares of a few people, probably checking for hidden quirks. But, they'll only see long straight scars instead of gills, and red, fleshy burn marks instead of wings. They quickly avert their eyes and Midoriya flushes with a shame he shouldn't feel.

He pulls the shirt over his head, but the sleeves only come down to his elbows, leaving the few scars on his forearms still exposed. Many of his previous injuries came from saving people, he shouldn't be ashamed of them. But to him they double as marks of weakness, proof to their viewers that he wasn't suited to heroism.

But, his worst scars are ones that no longer exist. He studies his hands for a moment, a phantom spike of crystal protruding from his palm, mocking him. The sound of small, bare feet hitting the pavement whispers in his ears. But it's all gone just as quickly as it appears and the noise of the locker room floods back all at once.

He flinches at a locker slamming shut. What few people remain give him wary glances as they head out.

Midoriya shakes himself, if he takes much longer he'll end up being late.

"We're going to be doing a basic physical assessment. Shouldn't be any different from what you did in middle school. No quirks, I'll be watching for them," Shouta tells those gathered.

Aizawa had gone over the list of students' quirks before class so he

could be on the lookout for any cheating during the tests. There were several that stood out for possible usage during the assessment and several that stood out for the exact opposite reason. The first was Shinsou Hitoshi, quirk, brainwash. It was obvious from his file that he had at least attempted the hero course exam. But, with the entrance exam geared more towards those with physical quirks it's no surprise that the teen hadn't passed despite how useful his quirk could be in the field. Looking at him it's obvious that the boy intends to rely completely on his quirk alone. He'd need to fix that. The second student that caught his attention is Midoriya Izuku, quirkless. He hadn't thought much of the fact before calling roll, quirkless students weren't unheard of at UA given how big it was. Shouta's taught one or two quirkless kids during his time at UA, all of them within the general education department. He remembers them as quiet students, weak if he's being honest. They spent too much time honing their minds while neglecting their body, not unlike many hero hopefuls who tended to rely too much on their quirks. And while the kid in front of him is as nervous and skittish looking as those before him he's still built better than any of his classmates.

"We'll start with the ball throw. Who wants to go first?"

Aizawa keeps an eye on everyone as they take their turns, scores usually averaging where he had expected them to. The Midoriya kid is only bested at the ball throw by a girl with a mutation quirk.

He stops a girl from using her adhesive quirk when she makes a solid landing in the standing long jump, watching her face plant in the sand instead. He's forced to do a double take when Midoriya takes his turn at it, something about movement tickling at his memories. But, his score is still only average, even if it does score within the top percentile of the class.

He stops a boy with a mild elasticity quirk from cheating during the toe touches and threatens to expel the girl with the adhesive quirk when she tries using her powers again during the grip strength test.

He saves the mile run for last, watching everyone's earlier spirits crumble as the laps drag on. The Midoriya kid only takes third, but it's obvious that he's barely even broken a sweat compared to any of the other students.

Aizawa can't help wondering if the kid could've done better. He's been

a teacher at UA for years and something about the kid's performance was telling him he was holding back.

Shouta can only draw his own conclusions about the fact. Of all people the hero was no stranger to bullying, especially when he was growing up. People feared his quirk and therefor feared him. He'd been the classic outcast loner up until he'd clawed his way into the hero course. But, even then he'd still been ridiculed for his quirk. He doesn't doubt that the Midoriya kid has also faced discrimination growing up. Aizawa had managed to catch sight of a few of the scars littering the teen's skin and is wary of calling a majority of them purely accidental.

He could understand trying to lay low when you're used to being a target like that.

Then again the kid was quirkless, perhaps he had actually tried his best and just happened to be weaker than the others. It seems a little unfair to Shouta that even after training as hard as that kid probably has he's only able to keep up with his untrained peers. But that's just how the world works he supposes. "I'm sure he'll still manage to find a good job somewhere," he mutters.

He pushes the thoughts aside, shifting his focus to where the Shinsou boy had scored compared to the rest. The hero's frown only deepens. "He'll need some work if he wants to make it into the hero course."

Their lunch period comes like a blessing, granting Midoriya reprieve from his thoughts. He escapes from the locker room with little fanfare, managing to make it out before anyone else. He makes his way back towards the classroom to meet with Reo, fighting the crowd just to get there.

He feels like his nerves are shot as he walks back, flinching at even the slightest brush of human contact. He'd tried his best to hold back on some of the physical tests, others he'd completely forgotten to in his panic. Physical activity is something that has always been able to calm Midoriya down. And trying to force himself into *not* pushing his body to the limit when he has near panic attack levels of anxiety? It was a Herculean task to say the least. He'd be impressed with how much he was able to hold back if the lingering panic he felt about Eraserhead being his teacher wasn't busy trying to choke him.

Reo's already waiting for him by the time he makes it back to the room. He's staring down at his phone, brows furrowed before he looks

up to see the boy walking towards him. He immediately looks concerned. “What happened?”

“P.E.” Izuku mutters.

“With who?”

“Eraserhead.”

Reo curses, gently pulling him away from the classroom as his peers begin returning. They slip down a nearly abandoned hall, tucking themselves into an alcove. He makes sure no one’s nearby before finally speaking. “Are you okay?”

He's definitely *not* okay, but he doesn't say as much to Reo. “I'm fine.” *Lie.* “There's no way he knows who I am, it's just that there's not many that've seen… both sides.”

There's a moment of silence as Reo thinks about how to address the issue before he finally replies in a quiet voice. “If you can out maneuver my uncle as many times as you have then I'm sure you'll be able to do it to some heroes you've only been around once or twice before this.”

Reo’s words help ease his anxiety somewhat, forcing him to think from a more rational view point. *He's right, there's no way they’ll be able to tell who I am. I've only met Snipe once and Eraserhead twice, as long as I don't let anything slip. I'll be okay. Everything's* ***fine****.*

“You seem so certain for someone who's nearly been caught so many times,” the voice in his head laughs. *“Your luck is bound to run out eventually.”*

Reo gently squeezes his shoulders in a show of support. “How about we go get lunch?”

Midoriya can only nod absentmindedly.

One of the things Midoriya has been silently worrying about since he’d discovered Reo attended UA was lunch. He suddenly remembers this as they follow the last remaining students into the lunch room. Even though Izuku knows Reo well, even though he is Midoriya’s best friend, the fear of public rejection still sits firmly in his chest. Behind closed doors everything was fine, but school was a different challenge

entirely.

No matter how you put it, Midoriya was quirkless. To his prior classmates he was a loser. He was a loner, he was weak. He was a deku whose puppet strings had long since been cut. And Izuku is wary to believe that the students here will think any differently. What would happen if Reo was faced with the discrimination Izuku faces? Would he defend him? What if Reo's friends were the ones doing the discrimination?

Reo never talked much about any friends he had at UA, always claiming many of the support students are too wrapped up in their inventions to really socialize outside of the classroom. Midoriya has always wondered if this story was told solely because he was trying to spare Izuku's feelings, or if there was something deeper to it. He feels fear gnawing at his belly, the voice in his head whispering his malicious input.

There's really only one way to find out though.

The lunch room is swarming with students, the roar of what must be hundreds of teenagers talking at once hurts his ears. There's a loud crackling of palm sized explosions going off somewhere nearby and Midoriya flinches violently, enough to draw Reo's worried gaze. Bakugou's vice carries easily over the crowd. "Shove off, Shitty-hair!"

Reo sighs just ahead of him, reaching back to drag him through the crowd. "Idiots," his friend murmurs, "Any more of that and they'll end up with detention." Reo doesn't know his tormentor by voice, doesn't even know him by name or by quirk. He marches on, ignoring the one person that hates Midoriya more than the voice in his head does with an ease that comes only from ignorance.

But, they make it to the lunch line without Izuku ever having to lay eyes on his childhood bully and for that he's grateful. The lunch room is big enough for the two of them to never run into each other and loud enough where he can't hear the teen when he yells as long as they're far enough away. It's… a strange feeling. An unknowing coexistence. It makes his chest feel just the slightest bit lighter. This place, UA, was an easy place to get lost in, a miniaturized Musutafu. Suddenly it feels all too easy for him to merge seamlessly into the crowd and never be seen again. He could survive here, just beneath the radar.

Bakugou would never see him, Eraserhead would never know his secret. He's just another student here. None of his classmates knew he was quirkless and there were only very few people who would be able to tell them otherwise. He could make it.

Reo points animatedly at some of the food, making suggestions here and there. Izuku takes the katsudon with hopes of it fueling him towards the end of the day.

“Where do you wanna sit? I usually just take whatever space is available to look over blueprints.” The teen doesn't claim he wants to introduce him to anyone and he doesn't direct them towards one area of the cafeteria over another. Maybe… maybe Midoriya had only been overthinking again. He knows Reo, he's the only friend he has. He wouldn't… The image of Reo standing idly by as someone calls him useless turns his stomach, but it's so wildly *unrealistic*.

A small smile tugs at Izuku’s lips before he eyes the area he'd heard Bakugou earlier. He uses his elbow to point in the opposite direction. “Over there maybe? It looks like there's a few seats.” Compared to everyone else the duo had arrived at lunch rather late. Most tables were either filled up by now or only sported an extra seat or two at opposite ends of the table. That is until Midoriya spies a familiar shock of lilac hair.

They make a beeline for the relatively empty table. What few kids sit there are all keeping to themselves. Izuku and Reo take seats next to each other.

Shinsou sits only two seats down from them on Midoriya’s side

“So who are your other teachers?” Reo asks, already busy digging into his food.

“Well I have Snipe for history,” Izuku mutters, glancing around.

Reo nearly chokes. “That's–”

“Yeah,” Midoriya huffs a sad laugh, picking at his food, “Here I thought that'd be the worst of it. Then Eraserhead walks in looking every bit as tired as I am and talking about *P.E.* of all things.”

“That's literally the worst class you could've gotten him for,” Reo mutters, taking another bite of rice.

“Hey,” Shinsou suddenly speaks, startling them, “It's Midoriya right?”

“Y-yeah,” Izuku stutters out, startled by his sudden interruption. “That's… me.” It sets him on edge. *Did we say too much?*

But his classmate only nods. “You did pretty good on those physical tests. Was it because of your quirk or something?”

Midoriya freezes before laughing weakly to cover the pause. “Nothing like that. I've been training at a dojo since I was a kid. Everyone there probably would’ve scored similarly.”

Reo eyes him nervously.

“Are you aiming for the hero course?”

Izuku feels his stomach sink lower. Reo's presence can only offer him so much support. “No.” He feels his sun collapse with that one word, the stars in his eyes flickering out. A void yawns open in the remains of his chest, held back by his ribcage alone.

He'll never be a hero.

For some reason this fact only hits him now. Midoriya Izuku was within the home of heroes. Despite this, he himself would never be one, forced to watch from the sideline as people more privileged than he were able to so easily achieve the dreams he'll never be able to come close to. He feels much colder than he was before.

Midoriya smiles. But the light in his eyes is gone. He feels like he's running on autopilot. Why is he here? Why did it have to be UA? Why did he feel the need to torture himself like this?

“What about you?”

To the ignorant ear the question Midoriya asks sounds genuine. To Reo it sounds like a boy on the brink of collapse and he doesn't know what to do to fix it.

His heart breaks at the look in his friend's eyes. He's seen darker, seen the boy in more deteriorated forms than this. But Izuku’s done many dangerous things with those eyes.

“I am. I heard if you do well enough in the sports festival they'll give you the option to move classes,” Shinsou states.

Midoriya blinks slowly. “They will?”

Shinsou nods, turning back to his food. “Yeah.”

Reo watches his friend with wide, worried eyes as a light flickers back on like a broken bulb finding the will to continue.

The grip on his chest lightens, his friend would be okay.

They eat in relative silence after that, the cogs in Midoriya’s head carefully turning over his options for the sports festival. He could do it. He doubts he could win, but he's certain he'll be able to hold his own. Just enough, he needs to last just long enough to prove himself.

Lunch ends with little fanfare as he and Reo say their farewells, Shinsou leaving just ahead of them. They promise to meet up again after school ends before heading back towards their own classrooms.

Having finally reached the last half of the day Midoriya feels a special kind of relief. He'd thought lunch would be a time for him to regain himself after his first few classes. But, somehow his lunch period had almost managed to turn against him as well. There's still a dark weight hanging over him that's trying its best to drag him down, but in the end lunch had given him more hope than it had taken all thanks to the lilac-haired boy just behind him.

Their science class goes by easily and Art History earns Midnight nothing but uncomfortably undivided attention from at least half the class. But he's able to pay attention during both, consciously writing notes throughout both periods. Math is more or less the same, though he can't deny how excited he gets when Ectoplasm uses a clone to pass out worksheets while he starts writing examples out on the board.

Eventually 1-C’s day draws to an end the same way it had started with Present Mic walking in as brightly as he had that morning though this time he's ready to teach English. “Can I get a *yeah!*"

There are fewer responses than that morning, but Midoriya would be lying if he says he hadn't responded this time.

His anxiety dwindles as the lesson drags on. This was no different from learning at Aldera, this was *better* than Aldera. He isn't getting bullied, the teachers actually care about what they were teaching, and Bakugou isn't waiting for him just a few seats over. He can do this. The sports festival would be his redemption arc. He'd show everyone that he wasn't weak, that he wasn't a deku, that he was more than just

his quirklessness.

The final bell rings and there's an immediate sigh that escapes the fifteen-year-old. Today feels like one of the longer days that he's had.

He packs his things carefully, waving goodbye to Shinsou who returns it with only a hint of confusion. The other teen doesn't yet know about his quirklessness, but he'd saved Midoriya with the same breath he'd nearly destroyed him. He gave Izuku hope where before there had been none and for that Midoriya would always be grateful.

He’s slinging his backpack over his shoulder when Yamada approaches him. He's smiling brightly, posture open. “Hey little listener. The principal wanted me to tell you he'd like to speak with you before you head out today.”

Any thoughts of becoming a hero abandon him. The vigilante feels his heart sink into his stomach. *Why the principal? Have they found me out? Do they know? Should I run?*

Present Mic must see the fear in his eyes. “You’ll do fine, it's not anything serious. He just wants to talk to you about some stuff.” Yamada offers him a reassuring smile that doesn't actually reassure the boy all that much.

Midoriya can only nod in response.

“Do you want me to show you where the office is? I doubt you'll know your way around the place yet,” his teacher asks.

Izuku’s brain ticks through at least twelve different panicked responses before finally replying. “Um, I'm sure my friend can show me, he's a third year here. Thank you for offering though.”

His teacher seems to brighten at the word ‘friend’ and Midoriya wonders what it is that makes adults so happy to hear it from him specifically.

“Alright, you two have a good chat then. I’m looking forward to having you in my class Midoriya.” Yamada grins at him and Izuku gets the distinct impression that the man's resisting the urge to ruffle the teen's already unruly hair.

Izuku bows respectfully on his way out. “See you tomorrow Yamada Sensei.”

Reo all but jumps him when he steps out of the room. “What took you so long?” he asks, pausing when he sees the look on his face. In a lower voice he asks, “You look like you just watched someone die.”

“My teacher pulled me aside for something.”

“For what? Don't tell me you already got in trouble?” Reo laughs, trying to lighten the mood he can tell Midoriya’s fallen into as they make their way down the hall.

“He said the principal wants to see me,” he whispers quietly, not quite believing the words himself.

His friend’s stride stutters, obviously not having expected the news. “What? Why!” he hisses lowly, glancing at the people around them.

“I don't know.”

“Do you think…”

Midoriya shakes his head. “I don't know what *to* think. It's either something stupidly mundane or it's something major and I don't take the principal of UA as someone to call me into his office just to talk about something small.” There's a moment of silence, both using it to catch up with their thoughts. “Do you know where his office is?” Izuku asks.

Reo looks at him with wide eyes. “You're actually going?”

“Well I can't just *not* go,” Midoriya hisses sourly. “If I run away it seems like I've got something to hide and even if I come up with a good excuse I'll still have to talk to him eventually.”

Reo glances at him nervously. “Right… I'll take you then. If anything happens I'll… I'll do what I can to help.”

“If you're talking about *that* then you're going to act like you don't know anything about it,” Midoriya hisses, glaring at his friend. “There's no reason for you to get dragged down with me.”

Reo frowns, but says nothing to dispute words, instead silently leading the way towards the elevator. The trip up feels like a death sentence, it feels like the end. *They don't have any evidence, they have nothing on me. It's only been one day. I've been careful. They can't know.*

The elevator chimes like a bell of warning, urging him to turn back, to run. But Reo steps out first and Midoriya forces himself to follow.

“I'll be waiting out here,” Reo whispers upon reaching the door.

Izuku knocks softly, heart in his throat, pushing the door open gently when there's a call for him to enter. The door shuts behind him louder than he anticipates, making him flinch.

UA’s principal is a rodent-like creature, somewhere between a small bear and large mouse. His eyes are all pupil, small and hard to track. “Midoriya I presume?” he asks with a smile.

Izuku nods. “Yes sir.”

The principal’s smile is kindly, but part of Izuku, the instinctual part, tells him he's being scrutinized. “I apologize for calling you in here so suddenly. I wanted to have a brief chat with you before classes began, but time restraints would not allow it.” He motions the boy towards a set of couches. “Would you like some tea?”

“No thank you,” he mutters, quietly taking a seat. He wonders if the other can hear his heart racing. He forces himself to breathe evenly.

“Well I hope you don't mind if I drink some then.”

“Not at all.”

Nezu nods, carefully pouring himself a cup before making his way towards the opposite couch. “I hope I won't take up too much of your time. I understand you usually have an extracurricular activity after school.”

“It's no problem,” Izuku replies. He needs to be calm, he can't show any weakness in front of his newest opponent. He had to skip into the mindset of Musutafu’s most wanted vigilante. “With today being everyone's first day back to school we've been given the day off.” He softly cocks his head, forcing an easy smile to his lips.

“It's good that I chose today to talk to you then.” The principal takes a small sip of his tea. “I'll jump straight into it. I am no stranger to the prejudices of this world, Midoriya-kun. I assume you are the same way, no?”

Izuku’s facade crumbles, finally understanding what this conversation with Nezu was about. He doesn't know if he should be relieved or not.

“Judging from your reaction it seems my assumption is correct.” Nezu is carefully composed, feelings and intentions hidden by the soft smile he wears. “I'm certain that our experiences in life have been rather different,” he murmurs, “But, we have both suffered at the hands of modern day society.”

A small burn scar pickles on the back of Izuku’s hand as he listens quietly. He runs his thumb over it without realizing, Nezu’s eyes tracking the movement.

“Of course you don't have to respond if you don't wish to. Many students prior to you have not. I'm not here to pressure you into telling your life story. I simply wanted to reassure you in saying that any and all forms of discrimination in UA are strictly prohibited. Even actions taken off campus are punishable to the fullest extent. There are not many quirkless individuals enrolled here, but we take their well-being very seriously.” He takes another sip of tea. “I noticed that your previous school has very few cases of bullying and discrimination filed, but I am always wary to believe everything I read. Especially in cases such as these.”

Midoriya watches as the principal takes another calming sip of tea and part of the boy wishes he hadn't refused his offer for some earlier. The situation seems a little unreal to him. The principal of UA is sitting before him, reassuring him that any bullies will be held accountable for their actions. Aldera had never reassured him with such words, let alone said them with such conviction. Middle school had disillusioned him of the idea that teachers would protect their students. Even coming from UA’s principal he's still too wary to actually believe the words.

He wonders if Nezu’s mind will change upon discovering that the main culprit of his previous bullying is a hero course prodigy. Midoriya wonders if he too will overlook the tears and the burns and the mental anguish Izuku has suffered for the sake of the furtherment of hero society.

Bakugou’s words are carved into the back of his skull, resurfacing every time the teen starts spiraling.

“Take a swan dive off the roof.”

“Take a swan dive off the roof.”

“Take a swan dive off the roof.”

Nezu would not be the first to avert his eyes. He locks his gaze with the principal, eyes hollow.

And Nezu can tell with that look alone that the boy doesn't believe a word of what he's said. But, he can't blame the child for that. After all, he too has refused to believe the words humans used in attempt to soothe him after his escape from the labs their kind had locked him in. For people like he and Midoriya, for those who have been betrayed by society itself, trust was something hard earned.

The green of his eyes are dull, the bags hanging just beneath them the mark of long nights spent mulling over the state of society. Like Nezu the boy's body is scarred, the aftermath of flash fire sparked in bullies palms.

The principal doesn't wish to fail the boy.

He isn't aware that he already has.

Chapter End Notes

> WHOO I UPDATED ON TIME □□□ I think I'm finally getting back into the flow of updating weekly, I've gotten a few questions about when I update and I try to update on Tuesdays, but there's no specific time
>
> Anyway that wraps up the first day at UA!!! It's been a long time coming but we've finally made it! I hope you all enjoyed it! (I know some people were excited to sparring, etc. in the pe portion but this is unfortunately just a regular pe class 😓 all that potential wasted I know LMAOODHDJF Either way I hope you all enjoyed this chapter, exciting things are coming soon so I hope you'll stick around to see them! Until next time!!

Celestial Sphere

Chapter Notes

> Tw:// very brief mentions of suicide and sex trafficking are contained within the first social media post

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart!!!

saturn

p-ruvianvipertooth

Zinnia reblogged **re0nniee**

MARSelo:

Since people seem to be FORGETTING how much Piper has done to help the community I'm here to make a info dump on all of his more recent activities that everyone is conveniently ignoring

Okay so before I start I want to address a few things:

1. Despite what some people are saying Piper has NOT stopped patrolling, though his activity did drop for a while after the Acro incident for what I assume is safety reasons, but he is back up to his regular activity levels

1. Piper is STILL patrolling the more at risk neighborhoods that heroes tend to avoid, the videos of the Acro incident placed Piper in a lower risk area that is usually patrolled by quite a few heroes which is what I assume fueled the clash. This is an area that is rather far from where Piper's assumed patrol areas usually are and since the incident he has not been sighted anywhere near areas with a higher density of heroes

1. Piper has NEVER instigated a fight with heroes or police, THEY have always provoked him first do NOT let anyone try and tell you otherwise 🐾🐾🐾

Alright, now to get into Piper's recent activities:

So it's only been a little over a month since the Acro incident, but already Piper has been accredited with saving forty eight people,

[Image 1: *Piper carrying two children beneath his arms out of a small house fire* .]

[Image 2: *Depiction of a man being shielded by Piper in the face of a rampaging villain* .]

[Image 3: *A grainy photograph of a figure that seems to be Pied Piper, hauling a teen back up the edge of a building* .]

Reports also imply that Piper tipped off local police to the presence of a small sex trafficking ring, giving both the location and name of one of the executives. This information was used to capture 4 front runners of the ring as well as a dozen other accomplices. Police and heroes were able to rescue 17 adults and 6 teenagers. You can check out the news report here and donate here to help the victims.

His other known recent accomplishments include:

-Pulling a drunk man out of the road

-Rescuing a kidnapped child

-Busting a large scale drug operation

-Stopping three different robberies in progress

-Helping usher civilians to safety during a destructive hero vs villain fight

-And stopping an attempted arson

Please keep all of these things in mind the next time Piper is on the

news for clashing with heroes or police because it's very likely that the fight happened at all was because he was attempting to either save someone's life or aiding in the incarceration of criminals

Also go check these investigative channels on Youtube, they've covered the drop in crime levels in the areas Piper has been patrolling. LilacMinds was the account that originally sent me on my Piper info quest. Two other channels, WINTERBIRDLARK and Dippy Does also helped provide me with a lot of information on some of the less reported incidents relating to Piper.

cud-zoo0:

you said piper has never instigated fights with the police during the whole "Acro incident" you're referring to, but he literally tackled a police officer hard enough to give him a concussion during that

iamaseagull:

That police officer you're talking about also pulled a weapon on him, Piper was provoked into acting against him, nothing would've happened if he hadn't felt threatened, plus this post was mainly about how many people Piper has SAVED since that incident. A lot of the people he's helped might not be *alive* right now if it wasn't for him

#pied piper #vigilante pied piper #this is a longer post but please read it if you have the time #it has a lot of good info

5,682 notes

Midoriya lays sprawled across his bed, still dressed in his school uniform.

UA's principal was known for his intelligence quirk. It made him far smarter than the average person. And more than anything it's that intelligence that Midoriya fears.

There's nothing in their meeting that should have given him away. But he'll need to lay low from here on out, live a quiet life and disappear into the crowd so he won't draw the principal's attention ever again. He can't afford to.

But, the idea of the sports festival resurfaces, lighting a fire inside him. He couldn't afford to give himself away during any of the events. And yet, proving himself during the sports festival would take

everything he has. Everyone would be giving it their all, and he couldn't afford to do any different if he wanted to make it into the hero course.

He rolls over in bed, studying his faded All Might posters in the afternoon light. *Is it such a crime to dream of being a hero?* “Would you tell me I could do it?” He asks one poster, tracing the outline of the hero’s silhouette with his eyes. “Would you tell me I could be a hero?”

His first day at UA seems like a weak accomplishment after having experienced it for himself, but his mother is instant on celebrating. They eat out that night, a rare treat that he feels guilty indulging in. Inko tells their waitress that it's his birthday, cheeks lightly flushed with unpracticed mischief. Izuku reddens at the workers that gather around their table to sing him happy birthday, but they laugh with each other afterwards, bellies topped off with a free slice of chocolate cake.

Upon returning home he resigns himself to what homework he has, exchanging a few texts with Reo about dinner here and there. He turns in as early as he dares. He feels exhausted, but his mind keeps him awake, spilling burning vitriol down his ears. He does his best to drown it out, forcing his mind to other thoughts. In the end he analyzes Best Jeanist’s quirk in his head until finally he falls asleep.

He wakes for his patrol later than anticipated, UA had taking more out of him than he'd realized. He shakes the sleep from his limbs, stretching as he dresses in his gear. The start of school marks the steady rise of temperatures, but the nights still remain cool enough to continue using his winter gear. He splashes a bit of cold water on his face in the kitchen to wake himself up before slipping his mask on over his head. There's a quiet staticky hum as he switches it on.

Even if Midoriya couldn't prove himself, Piper could do it for him.

Waking up the morning after his patrol is hell. His back aches from a tumble he’d taken off a shipping container and judging from the sharp pain near his liver, he must've pulled something again while fighting.

If possible he feels more exhausted than he had been going to sleep.

He takes a shower, washing the grime off his body. His vest had helped distribute some of the bruise worthy impact from last night's fall, but he's still left with a decent sized bruise maring his lower back. He studies it in the fogged mirror, the trail he'd cleared on it with his hand slowly clouding over again, obscuring the palette of midnight blues and purple painting his skin.

He sighs, letting his eyes fall closed. "I'll need to be careful changing for gym."

He meets Reo at their train again, his tie in no better condition than it had been yesterday. Reo teases him for it for a good ten minutes before finally having mercy and helping the boy fix it. They talk vaguely about his most recent patrol, the older teen wincing sympathetically when he tells him about his injuries.

"You think you'll be okay?"

"I've had worse," Izuku laughs tiredly as their train glides to a stop, the crowd gently swaying on their feet.

They exit with the rest of the UA students, noise rising as friends meet up with one another. It's because of this that Midoriya and Reo, who are towards the back of the pack, miss their sudden approach to the group of reporters crowding the school's front gate.

They're immediately swarmed by press the moment they get close enough.

"Can you tell us anything about the class All Might will be teaching!"

"What's it like having the number one hero as a teacher?"

"Do you know when All Might arrives at school?"

Midoriya freezes up beneath the cameras and microphones, fear swelling hotly between his ribs. Something presses into his lower back and he hisses in discomfort.

"All Might's not here today," a voice rises from further behind him. "Now leave, you're interrupting our classes. You'll have the principal to answer to if any of the students are late."

Eraserhead pushes gently past them, crowd parting before him. Reo

pulls Izuku along behind him, following the path the teacher carved out as those further within the crowd continue to shout questions at them.

It isn't until they've made it safely through the gates that Midoriya fully understands the questions they'd been asking. Izuku slows to a stop in the middle of the hall, Reo turning to look back at him in confusion.

Izuku only stares at him with wide eyes.

“All Might’s a teacher here,” he breathes.

Reo takes a moment to process this friend's awe before an amused smile tugs at his lips. “Evidently.”

By the end of homeroom his shock has worn away into excitement. He talks animatedly of the discovery between classes, not necessarily with Shinsou, but more *at* him. Though by the end of first period his excitement has filtered down into watery nervousness. With All Might joining UA’s staff that makes three teachers that he's met as Piper. Of the three heroes, All Might is the one least likely to recognize him, not simply because he doubts he'll see the man in a close enough setting, but because the hero undoubtedly meets hundreds of people in a single day. All Might’s short interaction with what he had assumed was just another small time hero would have been easily forgotten. But, that didn't prevent the “what ifs”.

Snipe calls on him during one of these “what if” moments and Midoriya has to embarrassedly ask him to repeat the question.

“I was asking if you knew when Japan first began passing laws on quirk discrimination.”

The boy flushes. “2153.”

The teacher nods, turning back towards the board. “Correct. Now Akamine, can you name one of the leaders that spearheaded this movement?”

Third period dawns like the tolling of a death bell. Another round of physical exertion in front of Eraserhead giving Midoriya an immediate

sense of anxiety, drowning out any precious thoughts on the number one hero. The real threat is one he's facing now. Even if P.E. at UA would be no different than it had been at Aldera Izuku doubts that he'll ever be able to fully let his guard down around the seasoned hero.

He changes his shirt with his back to the lockers, hiding his bruised skin, but in doing so exposes the scars littering his stomach and chest. He can't avoid the stares of his classmates, greedy eyes taking what they can from him, coming to their own conclusions about what they've seen.

They don't say anything though. No one ever does.

Once everyone's changed Eraserhead splits them into two groups and lets them have free reign of the basketball court. There's too many of them for it to be a proper match, but his teammates actually rely on him throughout the match. Despite Aizawa's presence he actually has fun with it. They might judge him for his scars and his muttering and his anxiety. But they're looking *at* him. They're seeing him for what he has rather than what he lacks. He doesn't know how long it will last, but he'll enjoy these moment until then.

A teammate high fives him with a smile. "Nice job!"

A foreign feeling builds wildly in his chest. "You too," Izuku laughs.

He leaves the locker room on cloud nine, a smile permanently sewed into his lips. He meets Reo back at the classroom letting the older teen lead the way to the cafeteria. It's as crowded as it was the last time, but it doesn't bother him as much as it had yesterday. Even Bakugou's distant shouting isn't enough to ruin the giddiness he feels shining in his chest. They sit at the same table as before though this time he makes sure to sit himself directly across from Shinsou.

Midoriya greets him with one of the brighter smiles Reo's seen. "Hi! I didn't get to introduce you yesterday, but this is my friend Tsukauchi Reo. "

Shinsou nods warily, staring between the two.

"Reo's a third year in the support department. And Reo this is Shinsou, one of my classmates."

“Nice to meet you,” Reo smile.

The older teen is happy to see Izuku so excited about something. It's been awhile since he'd seen those excited flashes of supernovas lighting up his eyes. But, he can't help but worry. Reo knows how prejudiced people are, even if they don't realize it themselves. And he doubts the boy across from him knows anything about Midoriya’s quirklessness just yet.

Izuku’s *strong,* but without a quirk very few would be able to see what he has past what he’s missing. He wonders what side Shinsou will fall on.

Amber eyes meet violet. He sends out a silent plea.

"*Don't hurt him."*

There’s no response.

They're halfway through eating their food when an alarm sounds, piercing right through their small talk. It's whine deafens them. Reo looks around with wide eyes, glancing back at the other two. “We need to go,” he says, quickly pushing himself up and abandoning his meal. Around them other students are doing the same, yelling at one another and making a mad scramble for the exit.

Midoriya grabs at the back of Reo's jacket, stopping him before he can disappear into the crowd. “Calm down! What's the alarm for?” He makes sure Shinsou stays where he is as well despite the obvious tension in the teen’s shoulders.

“It means someone's infiltrated the school!”

Izuku tenses, eye's hardening with resolve. “If this is real then right now we're safer here than trying to beat the crowd. We run the risk of getting trampled or trampling someone else. We have no idea who infiltrated the school or where they've come in from.” He can feel Piper's mind rising to meet his needs, steadying his racing heart. He's been through worse, been put under higher stress than this. “I doubt the school will leave us blind for long, but until then we need to assess what's happening.” He glances behind him at the windows. “If we can get a look outside we might be able to see something.”

And Reo can see it, one of the rare times where Midoriya slips into that vigilante mindset in front of him. He trusts his friend with this, trusts him more than he trusts himself. Shinsou is less inclined to this sort of blind faith, but still follows when Izuku leads them opposite of the exit, peering out the back windows.

“Anything out there?” Reo asks warily.

“Not that I can see.” Izuku glances towards the windows on the other side of the room. “We'll check the ones facing the front and see if there's anything out there. If there's nothing then we'll follow behind the crowd and help anyone that’s been injured in the rush.”

They pick their way through the scattered tables and chairs, weaving through the mess until they reach the windows. It's here that they find the answers to their questions.

“It's the press,” Shinsou whispers, obviously relieved.

Midoriya scowls, cursing, “They're putting people in danger for no reason, just because they want an exclusive on All Might? And what's the school doing with the alarm still going? They should've made some sort of an announcement by now.”

Unseen to any of them a boy windmills over the crowd in the hall, calming them with reassurance that the intruders are no one dangerous.

But, Midoriya stares out the window a little longer, eyes taking in the half destroyed gate. *Those walls are three feet thick and made of an assortment of tempered metals.* It's destruction wasn’t an accident.

He wonders which reporter had been so desperate to get that inside scoop.

(He does not know he's pondering the wrong questions.)

The alarm finally dies out and Izuku shakes his head, guiding the other two back to their seats where he continues eating. They don't say anything to each other.

Midoriya’s been through plenty of worse situations, but Reo and Shinsou have not. Even if the alarm has been false, their fear has been very real. This much is obvious by the way they pick at their cooling

food, watching students trickle back to their seats to connect their things.

They garner a few strange looks from those nearby. Izuku pays them no attention, mood still soured by the selfishness of the press being ushered out of UA's courtyard.

Eventually there is an announcement, but it's far too late for it to be of any real use. as the bell for the end of lunch rings not long after.

But, in the hoard of people heading back to their classes a voice goes up behind him. "It's you!" There's a hand that lands on his shoulder and Midoriya has to prevent himself from reacting too violently, still somewhat on edge. The person must notice the tensing of his shoulders though because they quickly release him with an apology.

Izuku turns to find a bright shock of red hair that he doesn't recognize. But, the shark toothed grin gives away the boy's identity. His thoughts on UA's 'invasion' dissolve benneathe the boy's shining red eyes.

"Remember me?" Kirishima laughs.

Midoriya blinks in surprise before smiling back. "You made it." Reo stops with him, Shinsou disappearing into the crowd as they head towards the wall where they won't be in the way.

"Yeah! The hero course too! I wanted to thank you for that umbrella! That was super manly of ya! I was hoping I'd run into you during yesterday's ceremony so I could return it but our class didn't get to go," he laughs. "What class are you in by the way? I can bring it to you before school starts tomorrow!"

"As long as it won't make you late," Izuku chuckles, "I'm in 1-C, the gen ed. Department."

There's another call from somewhere in the crowd. "Kirishima! Where'd you go man! I still don't know my way back yet!"

The red-haired teen glances over his shoulder. "That's me, I've gotta go, but I'll see you tomorrow, okay! Bye!"

"Bye," Izuku laughs.

As soon as the boy disappears back into the crowd, Reo nudges him

with an elbow. “You've got friends in nearly all the different courses now,” he laughs.

“We talked once and I loaned him an umbrella,” Midoriya murmurs. “That doesn't mean he thinks of us as friends.”

“I don't know, he seemed pretty happy to see you,” Reo teases.

Midoriya elbows him back playfully as they make their way down the hall. He gives Reo a condensed version of how he and Kirishima had met before they split off at the start of gen ed’s corridor with quick ‘goodbyes’.

Midoriya meets Shinsou back in their classroom. He sits, digging through his bag for the things they'll need for their science lesson.

“Thanks for that back there,” Shinsou mutters quietly from behind him. Izuku turns to look back at him, but the other teen doesn't meet his eyes. Despite this, it doesn't mar his sincerity.

Midoriya smiles. “Anytime.”

Izuku wants to say the rest of the day is normal. Unfortunately, his phone vibrates quietly in his pocket a third of the way through 5th period. It's an alert on instagram for an account he’s rigged to give him post notifications.

There's only one such account that Izuku has done this for.

ALBTM_

[Image: *A signed school disciplinary slip is shown sitting on a desk marked. The slip is marked for ‘inappropriate behavior’. The description field reads, “Hitting another student on the head with a Bible and screaming, “Infidel”.”*]

Liked by **tnk_ht** and 98 others

ALBTM_ I'm starting to run out of memes DFGIAE N BDJHGJA E

view all 3 comments

Liryian

Ive got memes that I can dm you if you need them 👀 👀 👀

AJax

that keysmash is so ugly □

goose.

HDNSBSJDBSGDMS MY FRIEND JUST SHOWED ME THIS YESTERDAY

Midoriya stares at the post for a long time. He knows Ectoplasm is likely to catch him with his phone out if he doesn't look away soon. But, his eyes are glued to the set of coded coordinates.

"*ALBTM,"* the voice from his memories spells out, "*Short for 'a little birdy told me'. Clever, right?"*

This was the post he's been waiting for.

Have the police seen it yet? When's the meeting time? Are heroes already on their way there? The sun in his chest shivers, solar flares lashing out against his ribcage. *Will Eri be there? Will Overhaul?*

He swallows thickly, looking back up at the board in time for Ectoplasm to glance around the room for a volunteer to answer the latest question. But, Midoriya can't comprehend any of it.

He does his best to work on the equation in his notes but all that comes out is the regurgitated coordinates of the newest meeting place.

He meets Reo after school, telling him in hushed whispers about the new information. The teen gives him a precautionary warning to let the police handle it as their train pulls away from the station. "I know, I was planning on calling you-know-who when I get back home just to make sure they know."

"I'm sure they do. If you know about it then there's no way they don't."

“Still,” Izuku mutters, staring out the window. “If I can't be there I at least want to know what's happening.” His grip on the handlebar above him tightens. “There's a lot riding on this. Overhaul…” his hearst clenches, fear rising at the mere utterance of that man's name. “He…”

Everyone suddenly feels too close. Someone bumps into him as the train rounds a bend and he flinches back violently. Too many people, too many hands.

“Izuku,” Reo calls him softly.

He turns to his friend, eyes dilated, panic threatening to swallow him.

He hadn't thought about it in so long .

The voice in his head takes on a different tone. *"Don’t lie to me, boy… I know who you are.”* Golden eyes and lilac fur and reaching hands and the brush of fingertips and– he… he remembers dying. It hurt, only for an instant. But in that instant his world had been set on fire, burning more brilliantly than any known star. He'd never known coming undone could hurt so badly.

“Izuku,” Reo calls softly again. “You're on the train… It's okay. You're just on the train.” His words are slow, deliberate, striving to keep Izuku's attention.

Midoriya hones in on his friend's voices, clinging to it desperately.

“You're standing and you're holding onto the handrail. You're safe.”

And Midoriya can feel thee bar beneath his hand, it’s cool and smooth against his fingertips. The train pulls to a gentle stop and the crowd thins as people file off, freeing up space and giving the teen more room to breathe.

Reo offers him a small, barely there smile as he regains control over his thoughts. His breathing slows, heart rate steadying.

“Better?” he asks.

Midoriya nods silently before croaking out a broken, “Yeah.”

Izuku’s stop arrives before Reo’s does, and he leaves the older teen in favor of the dojo. He still feels a bit shaky, mind just a little

scrambled. But training helps clear his mind, roots him to the present. Gamon keeps him focused on their fists, twisting past punches and blocking kicks. He weaves his body into the open spaces. His head is clear of all thoughts, all problems. He's grounded in reality. His lower back prickles from his bruise and his side twinges in pain from his pulled muscle. But all of it keeps him the present.

His heart feels slow and steady in his chest. It's rhythm lulls him.

Gamon's left sprawled across the mat by the end of their match, panting heavily. Midoriya blinks down at them stupidly as if coming out of a haze. He looks surprised to see his opponent on the floor.

Gamon laughs at his perplexed expression. "Are you sure you won't enter a tournament? You'd easily take home a medal."

Izuku offers him a hand up, dragging them back to their feet. "It's only needless violence."

"It's not needless if you think of it as training," Gamon informs him, "There's lots of different fighters, and if you're good enough you'll be able to face the best of the best. It must get boring only ever fighting the same few people, right? We've all got patterns to our fighting whether we like it or not."

"Maybe one day," he murmurs offhandedly.

Gamon smiles, counting it as a win.

Ji-woo appears behind him as he's packing up after their lesson. "You did good today," she says, catching his attention. He turns to look at her, pausing what he's doing. "We've got a new batch of kids coming in next Monday and I was hoping you'd be able to help me with them. Some of the older kids are participating in an upcoming competition and I wanna make sure they're ready for it. I just need you to run them through some of the basics, things you learned on your first day."

Izuku's eyes light up, the fog in his head lifting long enough for a mix of excitement and pride to take its place. "Hai!" This woman trusts him. She thinks he's good enough to teach her new students.

Ji-woo huffs a laugh at his reaction. “I think helping others suits you, kid. You’ll do great.” The words are followed by a not so gentle pat on the back.

For as long as Midoriya has known Chee Sensei he can’t say that they’ve had many meaningful conversations with one another. But, the warmth that he feels spreading in his chest tells a different story.

“Helping others suits you”

His smile widens without his permission, twinkling stars backlighting his emerald eyes. “Yeah.”

Inko isn’t home when he returns and he uses this opportunity to head for Piper’s phone. The dojo had helped clear out some of his nastier thoughts, but his problems wouldn’t disappear with a little physical activity like his nightmares would. He locks his bedroom door behind him as he sorts through his gear, slipping on his mask as he dials the detective’s number. He pulls up the post he’d seen in math on his other phone as the call goes through.

“This is Detective Tsukauchi Naomasa, Musutafu Police, Quirk Crimes division. How can I help you?”

“It’s Piper.”

Naomasa tenses. “I’m assuming this is about the post on the account you mentioned before.”

“You already know about it then?” The vigilante’s voice echoes through the speaker.

“We’ve already sent people out to watch the location. There’s no need to worry, kid.” He leans back quietly, studying the pock marked ceiling tiles.

(There were many reasons to worry.)

On the other end of the line Izuku feels himself relax, the man's

reassurances easing the tension in his shoulders. “Thank you, Detective.”

“We’re doing our best to find her.”

The vigilante sits slowly on his bed, springs creaking beneath his weight as he too stares up at the ceiling. He remembers his defeat, his failure, remembers her hurt and her sacrifice.

He remembers her red eyes.

He whispers a quiet, “Thank you” before ending the call.

Chapter End Notes

> It's 2:30am, i am tired. I hope you all enjoy this chapter it's two hours off of Tuesday but close enough✧ Big things are coming, i hope you're prepared because i'm definitely not. Until next time!

Galactic Nucleus

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart:

helen-renee

Izuku wakes the next morning looking haggard as usual, hair a complete mess, eyes bags ever present.

He had stopped by to see Reo after patrol, finding his friend working on a new project for school. He'd become invested in watching him work on it, staying far later than he had any right to on a school night. Reo had eventually kicked him out, telling him to go to bed. But, the damage has already been done by that point.

He's too tired to force himself into the shower and instead slips straight into his UA uniform. His phone buzzes on his nightstand, drawing his tired eyes.

He expects a message from Reo, or some bit of hero news from one of the sites he follows.

Instead he finds a new notification from Instagram. His sun wavers, flickering beneath the strain of gravity. Post notifications weren't a feature on the app, but Reo had managed to add a few upgrades for one specific account the vigilante needed to track.

(This is where everything goes wrong.)

ALBTM_

[Image: video game screenshot of a character poorly hidden behind a potted plant, image's text reads: "sneak 0"]

Liked by **tnk_ht** and 132 others

ALBTM_

Location compromised, wait for your handlers to contact you. Must be a snitch among the ranks! #ShowMustGoOn #WellGetEmNextTimeBoys 😓✊

view all 4 comments

10.10.Sk LMAO That can't even be counted as a hiding place

MistressJoke that right there is how NOT to play video games

_Pro_Pio_ n00b

RAOR yeah a snitch is /definitely/ the reason they were found

Midoriya stares blankly at his phone for a moment, everything about it screams abnormal when he compares it to the posts before it. He rereads it one last time to make sure his mind isn't deceiving him.

Location compromised

Wait for handlers

Snitch

The show must go on

Midoriya curses, eyes wide. "They changed the meeting spot," he whispers to himself. His tie dangles limply between his fingers. His heart thunders in his chest, frozen in a moment of disbelief. "They hardly even tried to code it." He stares at it for a moment longer. "But where did they move it to?"

What do I do? What can I do? Do the police know? Of course they know. But there's no way for them to know where the new meeting place will be. There's no way for me to know where the new meeting place will be.

"Izuku! Breakfast is ready!"

The boy's head snaps towards his door. *What can I do?*

He quickly strips from his uniform, throwing his pajamas back on.

"Izuku?"

While he can still hear the woman in the kitchen he does a few silent jumping jacks until he hears her footsteps in the hall. He quickly throws himself back in bed.

There's a soft knock on his door. "'Zuku?" The woman peeks inside the boy's room to find him still in bed. "Honey? You're not up yet?"

Midoriya groans rolling over, he keeps his eyes half lidded, voice groggy. "Mom?" he croaks out. He pushes himself up, clutching his head with a free hand. "I don't feel so good."

The concern on her face makes his heart ache uncomfortably, but he has to do *something*. She presses the back of her cold hand to his forehead.

There's no way she can know that he's flushed with fear fueled adrenaline rather than fever.

"You're a little warm," she murmurs, checking the time as she nibbles at the corner of her lip. "I'll call into work, tell them I've gotta take care of you," Inko mutters to herself, turning to grab her phone before Izuku stops her.

"Mom, you don't have to worry about me. I'll be fine as long as I sleep some more, you know how I usually am with colds. I'm sure that's all this is."

She turns to look at him softly, the furrow between her brows loosening. She presses both of her hands to his cheeks, leaning in to kiss his forehead. "I keep forgetting you're in highschool now. All grown up," she whispers quietly. "Then I'll go get some medicine from the cabinet and some water and I'll bring you a bowl of soup. You need to at least try to eat something before going back to sleep an—"

"Mom," he murmurs softly, drawing her attention back to him. "You'll be late. I can get all that."

"Oh~" she plants another kiss on her forehead. "You're right. I'll leave you some soup and put the rest away. Make sure you take some medicine and call me if you need anything. Katsumi owes me a favor so I can always have her take over for me if I need to, okay?"

He nods, forcing a small smile to his lips. "Okay."

Midoriya's up and out of bed the moment he's sure Inko's left for good.

What do I do? What do I do? Runs through his head on loop, threatening to drive him insane. He scrambles for his phone, Reo's voice ringing through his head, he needs to call Detective Tsukauchi.

He pauses.

But what will he tell him? What *can* he tell him?

There's no new posts, no new stories, nothing to tell him when or where the meeting's been changed to. Midoriya stares at his phone helplessly.

Then he notices what he'd previously glanced over before.

Liked by **tnk_ht** and 132 others

tnk_ht

He taps at Tanaka's profile, scrolling to the latest post.

tnk_ht

[Image: The backs of two people are caught mid stride towards a restaurant, the sign outside reads 'Sensō Shoku'.]

Liked by **. HirAiri.** and 7 others

tnk_ht Gotta eat good before battle

view all 3 comments

10安.倍10 Love that place!!! 10/10 Recommend the curry

.MMmMM. Y'all mind if I drop in?

tnk_ht Sorry bro business calls, we can meet up tonight tho, celebratory drinks on Haddo 🍺🍺🍺

The words "wait for your handlers" slithers their way through his head. All the evidence points Midoriya to only one conclusion about the post. *He's meeting up with his contact.* His grip on the phone tightens, hiding the tremor in his hands.

Midoriya hones in on the name of the restaurant. His heart races in his chest. He has to get there. He quickly searches the address, pulling up the location on his phone. He checks the distance, then the time.

I won't be able to make it on foot. Taking the train is always an option, but… His thoughts trail off, *it could be dangerous.* He glances back at his closet, catching the barest peak of the papers plastered across the back wall.

In the end the decision is made for him, after all, he's done worse.

He dresses as casually as he can in his vigilante uniform, hiding his belt and all its gear beneath his hoodie. He dons a regular face mask while Piper's gets shoved halfway into a pocket with his gloves. There's no hiding the spikes on his boots, and his staff is a necessary evil.

Izuku slips down the balcony, heart threatening to claw its way up his throat. Even if he's trying his best to keep a low profile, he's bound to draw eyes.

He hops over the ticket counter at the nearest train station. It draws several outraged cries from bystanders, but he rushes on. If he stops he won't make it.

He has to make it.

This wasn't only about Eri or Overhaul anymore, there's no telling just how people could be put in danger if they aren't stopped here. As far as Piper knows he's the only one who has a chance of finding the new meeting place before it's too late. People could die if he fails.

He sticks to the edge of the train car and presses his staff against the wall where it won't look as suspicious. Anxiety threatens to consume him. The sun in his chest lashes out against his ribcage. He can feel the stares of the people around him. *Please, please,* he begs them silently, *Just let me do this. Just let me do this much.*

The stop for school comes and goes, UA blurring outside the carriage window.

Will he make it in time? Will Tanaka still be there? Will he even be headed to the new meeting place? What if the detective doesn't pick up his call when he finds it? What if the heroes don't arrive in time? He won't be able to stop everyone by himself. He'll die.

He'll die *again.*

He doesn't want to die again, alone.

His nails bite harshly into his palms, leaving red, crescent moon marks in their wake. He bows his head, hiding his eyes.

Just two more stops.

Sansa strides towards Tsukauchi's desk, lips pulled into his equivalent of a frown. "We just got word that someone fitting Piper's description was seen leaving a train station in Ikuno ward's shopping district."

Naomasa looks up, brows furrowed low before realization flashes in his eyes. "He must've seen the post," he replies, quickly pushing himself up. He grabs a set of cruiser keys off his desk, striding for the exit. "He could know something we don't."

"Wouldn't he have called you?" Sansa asks tensely, following him out of the station.

"It's either he's following up on a possible lead or he thinks police interference would cause the meeting place to move again," he replies tersely. "Have someone call the local stations in that area and tell them to put all available police and heroes on standby. We have no idea what this group is planning, but with this large of a gathering we need to be prepared for anything."

"Yes sir."

Relief settles in his chest when Midoriya spies Tanaka through the restaurant window. Each minute that passes as he watches him talk with the others raises the vigilante's sense of urgency. He's not even sure Tanaka had been accepted as a part of the group that the Precepts were collecting. But, Tanaka is his only lead at this point, even if there's every possibility that this could lead him nowhere he couldn't leave him. But, Haddo's been sitting just beside the teen for the past fifteen minutes and the man had confirmed himself a member just by knowing about how to find the meeting places. It takes another thirty minutes before the group finally leaves, Tanaka talking animatedly about something as they make their way out. He feigns a few punches with a grin that soon turns caustic.

Midoriya melts further into the shadows at their appearance, tailing

them as stealthily as he can when he's dressed in all black and carrying around a pipe that's just a head shorter than he is. For Eri's sake and the sake of the others who would suffer at the Percept's hands, he cannot afford to be seen. The group makes short stops at two other places, always trailing more people than they had gone in with. They draw enough eyes to be suspicious, but never enough to warrant a call to any heroes or police.

When they finally reach a less populated area Izuku slips his mask and gloves on, nervously cleaning his staff as he follows. His emotions are at war with his vigilante persona. Remaining calm under pressure was a skill Midoriya needs for his nightly survival, but he can't stop himself from *remembering.* And remembering throws him off balance, it makes him useless in a place where he has to rely on himself.

Izuku had grown up as an outcast, as a liability. Because of this he was used to being alone and being forced to fend for himself. After the day he'd met Eri he relied on himself alone to track her down.

But, it was this delusioned sense of self sufficiency that had led to his death.

In recent months he's realized that relying on others is just another important part of survival. He has Reo now, and funnily enough he also has his uncle. But this situation is beginning to force him back into old habits.

Every step he takes brings him closer to the man that'd killed him, but even so he can't afford to hesitate. Hesitation could result in a second, final death.

He does his best to drown out the memories of that man's voice.

"I know who you are... Piper."

He has to focus on his surroundings.

The buildings have gotten comparably shorter compared to the area they were in before, changing from shining store fronts and restaurants to dingy office buildings and warehouses. Conditions get worse the more they walk, buildings breaking down from lack of care. Leafy plants spring up from the cracked sidewalks, unchecked and surviving the only way they know how.

Ahead of him Tanaka's laugh carries, the group's lust for violence palpable.

The chime of warning bells rings in his ears, warding him away. Reo's voice hisses in his head, "Turn back, turn back. What will your mother think?"

He has no plans to die today, but few people ever do.

He shakes off the image of merciless golden eyes.

There are people he has to save, villains he has to defeat, little white-haired girls he has to rescue from the clutches of evil men. His fingertips tingle. Voices whisper anthems of defeat and failure in his ears, but he can't afford to listen.

The vigilante slips his phone out, making certain he's far enough away from the group before he dials Tsukauchi's number.

The man speaks first, "Piper?" He sounds expectant, hopeful.

Midoriya makes a quiet noise of confirmation, keeping his eyes on the group.

"Is this about the newest post?" Tsukauchi asks, voice crackling through the speaker.

"I'm tailing about seven people right now," the vigilante whispers, "One of them I only know by the name Haddo. He's the one I originally overheard talking about the meeting. I still don't know where they're going, but we've entered an area with a lot of abandoned warehouses east of the Ikuno shopping district. I'm assuming the meeting is being held in one of them, but I won't know where exactly until we get there," he mutters quietly, ducking around a corner when someone turns, casually strolling backwards with a cocky grin so she's facing the group. When they disappear down another street he's quick to follow.

"I know the area that you're talking about," the detective answers, "We're close to it, but that place spans for miles. You'll ha—"

"Detective?" Midoriya asks. He glances down at his phone, bewildered to see the 'disconnected' screen flashing back at him. The boy curses, redailing the number to no avail. The vigilante continues tailing the group as he tries calling back, but every attempt leaves the ringer cut short. He curses quietly but forces himself to continue following the group. He can't let them too far out of sight. He can't lose them, not here, especially not after losing contact with the Detective.

“Piper? Piper?”Naomasa curses, staring down at his phone with wide eyes as they settle at a stop light. He glances at Sansa. “Throw on the lights and turn here, Piper's tracked the general location of the meeting place to the east edge of the ward. I'm going to call in reinforcements to help us find the exact place.”

The other officer nods grimly, flipping on the lights and sirens and taking off down the street as soon as their path’s clear.

A frown tugs at his lips as he dials a new number. “This is Detective Tsukauchi Naomasa with the Musutafu Police Department. I'm requesting back up on the east end of Ikuno ward, we’ve narrowed down the possible location of a large gathering of criminals to the area and need assistance searching the area.”

Midoriya tries redialing the detective several more times before giving in and focusing his full attention back to his targets.

There's only another five minutes of walking before the group suddenly grows quiet. The building they approach doesn't look any different from those around it, but then again Midoriya had never expected it to.

He waits until all of them have disappeared inside before he approaches. He quickly checks his surroundings before creeping around the side of the building. He keeps himself low to the ground, steps quiet. He has no idea what he’ll find inside, but there’s no way he dares to just waltz in like the others had. He spies a busted out window about a story up and uses a rusted forklift nearby as a ladder of sorts. Izuku sets his staff aside for the moment as he reaches up to latch onto the windowsill, glass crunching quietly beneath his gloves. He hauls himself up to his elbows with a grunt of effort, just managing to get a glimpse of the inside.

The sun in his chest threatens to collapse in on itself at the sheer numbers hidden inside. There's what must be almost two hundred people crowding the floorspace, muttering to each other in low voice. The vigilante drops from his spot, his landing louder than he'd like against the forklift's caged roof. He tries once again to get in contact with the detective. His fingers tremble, fumbling over the keyboard. This time there’s only a dull static when he presses the phone to his ear. He curses again, frustration rising. *Is it a quirk?*

Izuku glances back up at the window. *I need to know what they're planning.* He claws his way back up to the window. Earlier he’d

noticed that the warehouse's ceiling was littered with rusting support beams. If he can get on top of one, it'd be the safest place for him to listen in to anything being said inside.

The window itself is just big enough for Midoriya to crawl through, though he can feel the shards of broken glass stabbing into his sleeves and pant legs as he shimmies over it. It's tricky pulling his staff through with him, he has to be careful not to let it bump into anything. The boy prays that no one looks up as he hauls himself out along the closest rafter. A low murmur settles over the crowd, covering the sound of his footsteps. He's only about a story up, but the height is just a little dizzying when he's balanced on such a thin surface.

He keeps his staff close to him, hiding behind a vertical support beam and keeping himself as low as he dares. He stays towards the back of the room, just at the edge of the crowd.

It's hard to distinguish any conversations from where he is, but he does his best to listen in. He catches snippets of words here and there, but never enough to make sense of anything.

A few more groups file through the doors below him as he tries one last time to dial Tsukauchi's number with no luck. He's in the middle of tucking his phone back in his pocket when the upstairs door that leads into what he assumes is a control room swings open. The door is large and immediately dwarfs the white-haired figure that makes his way out of it. He steps across the balcony above the crowd. His clothes are worn, and severed, gray hands litter his upper body. Following behind the man is a hulking beast of a person, bluish black skin striped with scars. A beak like maw protrudes from its face filled to the brim with dozens of jagged teeth.

It's brain is almost entirely exposed.

The crowd quiets at their appearance.

The white-haired man is the only one to speak. "You all know what you're here for," he tells them. "We'll leave the npcs to you." The villain scratches feverishly at his neck, nails leaving red streaks against the pallor of his skin. "It's time to put hero society in its place once and for all." Midoriya catches the barest hints of the sadistic grin that surfaces just beneath the hand covering his face. He begins descending the steps, closing in on the crowd. "Don't fail."

It's here that Midoriya realizes his previous mistakes. It's here that he

realizes that *this* is the man behind all of the rumors he's been hearing. It was this man, *not* Overhaul. Piper watches silently as any hope he may have built up falls mercilessly apart.

This gathering is not Eight Precepts doing.

Eri is not here, she never was.

A tear in space wanes open at the front of the warehouse, obsidian smog yawning wider and wider to consume the open air.

Midoriya is alone here.

Help will not be coming.

He has failed.

Chapter End Notes

KSDJFSDFDSJ So some of you might've seen it coming, some of you might not have jkahsdfkajsdf I've have the next 2-3 chapters written for a very long time now, from before I'd even started posting the fic and now we're so close JDSFHJALSDKFJASDF I will not apologize for the cliffhanger, nor the upcoming ones that you'll hate me for even more than you probably do now □ □ □ I hope you all are just as excited for what's coming up as I am because honestly KDKFJALKSJDFASDF ive waited way too long for this moment □
Until next time!

Eclipse

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I FORGOT TO ADD THE ART AKSDJFHASJKDFJ:

blackholeca x

rey-bnha

helen-renee

Midoriya is quick to analyze the situation as soon as he sees the white-haired man step through what he now realizes has to be a warpgate.

The best case scenario for this meeting would have been a time for planning, but Tanaka's caption from earlier about a battle had warned him otherwise. This was not a time for planning, this was the enactment of a plan.

He has to follow them. He has to— he can't—

But what can I do against an army of two hundred?

His heart is racing, mind conflicted. He can't get in direct contact with the detective, but he can't wait for the man to find this place on his own. The vigilante stares back at the warpgate, catching a glint of armor at the top edge of the smog.

More and more villains are filing through it as he sits here and does nothing.

So he does something.

He creeps back towards the window, ripping a smoke grenade from his belt and tossing it into the parking lot below, red smoke beginning to flood the area. It's his last ditch effort to contact the detective.

The vigilante clambers back across the rafter, closer towards where the warpgate continues to escort villains through. He reaches a clear stretch and breaks into a run across the beam, drawing eyes from those below him. He has no idea where the gate will take him, or what's waiting for him on the other side. That villain had said he

wanted to *“put hero society in its place”*, but what did that mean?

This is all important information that he should know before throwing himself through, but he doesn’t have time to just wait for it. He tosses his staff down just next to the portal with a loud clang, lowering himself over the side of the beam and dropping into a hang. The people just below him make room for his landing. His knees protest when he hits the ground and he forces himself into a roll to distribute the weight of his fall.

He stumbles his way back up to his feet, anything but graceful as he picks up his staff.

The words, “It’s Piper!” are the last ones he hears before diving through the warpgate.

The void is cold and dark and reminds him too much of dying at Overhaul’s hands, but his adrenaline keeps him sane enough to keep going.

It’s bright on the other side of the portal, nearly blinding, but he’s quick to take in his surroundings once his eyes adjust. He doesn’t recognize where they are at first, a domed building of some sort, but that’s all he has time to take in before he forces himself to move. None of the villains who’d recognized him in the warehouse seem to have come through just yet, so he needs to act before any of them can spread the news of his presence. Taking out the one with the warping quirk would be ideal to stop anymore villains from making it through. But, he knows next to nothing about the quirk’s user. Izuku looks back on the portal, trying to formulate an effective plan. He’d need to disrupt their quirk somehow, knock them out.

Before Midoriya had jumped through, he remembers seeing some sort of armor towards the top. Izuku searches for it now, catching a glint of something in the dark mist that hangs just below what the vigilante recognizes as narrowed yellow eyes.

There.

Izuku checks that no one’s watching him before cutting around to the back of the warpgate. He drops his staff there, pulling out Reo’s grappling hook and looking again for that glint of metal. When it reappears beneath the swirling mist he gives the rope a good swing, and launches it upwards, its hooks extending out the moment it hits open air.

There's a quiet clang as it catches and he pulls.

The boy doesn't need to see the villain's face to see their surprise. The fact that the warpgate wavers in front of him is enough confirmation. Midoriya loops the rope around his hands to get a better grip before wrenching it downwards, hauling the villain towards the ground. It's easy enough to accomplish, as whatever is being protected is light enough to drag downwards. By the time anyone can react he's staring into the villain's glowing eyes and has one of his escrima sticks out. The boy jams it against the metal piece and electrocutes him.

Armor always has something to protect.

Izuku watches the portal waver once more before it cuts out completely, leaving nothing but air and the collapsed body of the villain between Izuku and the gathered villains. The boy can see the leader pushing through the crowd, there's still more people than he'd like, but it's much less than he'd seen in the warehouse. He lets go of the grappling hook, leaving it stuck in the villain's armor before sliding his escrima stick back into his belt. He slips his foot under the pipe, kicking it up and bringing it back within reach.

The leader makes his way to the front of the group, one hand clawing furiously at his neck. "You."

The boy takes a defensive stance, the end of his staff pointing towards the villain. "Me."

Why am I even here? What can I do against all these people?

Izuku's eyes flicker up when his peripheral catches sight of the blurred figure quickly descending the building's front steps.

His eyes linger longer than they should on the man, startled to find it's none other than Eraserhead.

His gaze zip back towards the white-haired villain when he rushes towards the boy. Izuku switches stances, backing up a bit before making his own charge at the man. At the last moment he sweeps his staff out against the villain's ankles, tripping him. He dodges around the man, using the path he'd cleared through the crowd to make his escape. He takes advantage of everyone's surprise to sprint in the direction of the steps, shoving a villain or two aside along the way.

Some are quicker to respond than others, three or four breaking through the crowd to give chase. He pulls a smoke bomb out and

tosses it behind him when a projectile wizzes by his head. The vigilante skids to a halt, feet throwing up dust as he spins on his heel and waits for movement within the smoke. Izuku twirls the pipe in his hands, wielding it like a bat at the first figure to emerge from the smoke.

Something cracks under the force of the swing, the thump of a body collapsing following soon after. He can't afford to think about it.

There's a fist that comes towards his left side that Midoriya redirects on instinct, the villain who'd thrown it stumbling out of the smoke. Izuku brings an elbow down on the man's spine, it's not enough to take him down, but there's a grunt of pain that escapes him. With his free hand he pulls out an escrima stick, delivering a shock to the back of the villain's neck before he can turn around. They drop with a few twitching limbs.

The boy quickly slides the weapon away as he takes off towards the stairs again, not waiting for anyone else to emerge from the dissipating smoke. He needs to keep his distance, group up with Aizawa if he can or at least warn anyone else who's nearby. He's not expecting Eraserhead to be only a few feet in front of him, hair already floating and eyes glowing a flaming crimson. The sight is enough to take the vigilante back to their first encounter outside of school.

"I'd never realized how fragile dreams were."

"It's the world we live in," the hero's voice echoes.

Izuku blinks the image away as his mind registers Aizawa's capture weapon flying towards him. The fifteen-year-old stumbles to the side, barely dodging the cloth as it whips past him, ruffling the edge of his hood. There's a strangled sound behind the vigilante, and when he looks back there's a villain whose arms have been pinned to their sides. Midoriya's gaze finds the hero's.

"The first time we met…" Shouta says, eyeing the fading smoke for any movement, "You said you wanted to save people, right?" he asks the kid. "My class is up there, they could use some protection." His eyes land briefly on the vigilante when he glances over at him. There's a mix of emotions on what he can see on the boy's face, confusion, realization, fear. The kid sends a quick look around the building, brows furrowing like he's only just realized where he's at, and maybe he has. His eyebrows are drawn together, teeth grit behind closed lips,

there's an all too familiar look of fear wavering in his eyes.

"It wasn't long ago that I'd dreamed of being one of your students."

"The world is a cruel place," Aizawa mutters, turning away from Piper, "But, as a hero, I exist to fix that. It's the same for you isn't it?"

The vigilante's resolve hardens. There's no need for more words, the boy only nodding at him before taking off towards the stairs.

Shouta turns his full attention back towards the approaching villains, further tightening his capture weapon on the latest one before running forward and driving a knee into the man's jaw.

Don't get hurt, problem child. I've got enough kids to worry about already.

By the time Midoriya makes it to the top of the stairs, panting and cursing the architect, a hero he immediately recognizes as Thirteen has torn a hole through the side of the building with their quirk. Many of the students are already ducking through the opening, a shock of spiky red hair clueing him into exactly what class it is.

1-A, if this really is the USJ then they're probably here for rescue training. He spares one last glance down at the plaza. *Is this what that man meant by putting hero society in its place? He's trying to kill UA kids?*

Out of the corner of his eye he catches a glimpse of a shadow gathering above the retreating group of students and Izuku's heart rate rises, sun threatening to spill over in his fear. The vigilante chances a guess that the warpgate has woken up.

Thirteen seems to notice it as well as they move to put themselves between the remaining students and the mist.

"I apologize for being late." The dark mist swirls and expands, body covering their escape route, blocking their view of the students outside. "We are the League of Villains. We've invited ourselves into the home of heroes so that we might bring an end to the Symbol of Peace."

So it's really not the Percepts , Izuku thinks before his breath catches in his lungs. *All Might? That's why they're invading UA of all places? Not for the kids? They're trying to kill him?*

"I believe All Might should have been here. Has there been some kind

of change?"

Thirteen's stance shifts. "Everyone move back!"

"Either way, my job is to scatter those of you that remain."

Thirteen activates their quirk before the other can, mist being dragged in and disappearing into the destructive force hidden within the hero's suit.

"Black hole, a quirk which sucks up everything and turns it all to dust. I see. What an astounding power."

Midoriya knows what will happen next as more of the black mist materializes behind the hero. Page 13, volume 10 of his hero analysis notebooks, listed among the hero's possible weaknesses. "Thirteen!" Izuku pushes through the remaining students and towards them.

1. *Having their quirk turned against them*

"Shut off your quirk!" But, he can already see the back of their suit cracking, disintegrating, being sucked in by their own power.

"As they say, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. That which you create, you shall become."

He knocks shoulders with another student before breaking through the group and sprinting towards the hero. He drops his staff as he skirts the second warpgate before running and tackling Thirteen out of the way. For the brief moment that he spends in the path of the black hole Izuku can feel the tug of gravity pulling at his clothes, his skin, his atoms, threatening to tear him apart, to undo him *again*.

And then Thirteen's quirk cuts off and the extra warpgate dissipates.

The boy picks himself up off of the hero, leaning to the side to quickly check if their quirk caught anything other than their suit. He grimaces at the damage, patches of their skin having been pulled away. It's a bloody mess, but the injury seems contained to their skin, the muscles underneath seem outwardly unharmed.

"You."

Izuku looks up to see the villain's misty yellow eyes narrowed at him.

Midoriya feels bile rising in his throat. "Everyone's been calling me 'you', you'd think it was my name or something," he croaks, the slip

up is covered by his mask's distortion. He can feel the stares of the remaining students boring into his back as he stands, dusting his gloves off on his pant legs. "I go by Piper, the least you could do is use it."

"You were not part of the plan."

"Yeah, none of you were part of my plan either. Guess we're both having a rough day then." Izuku doesn't take his eyes off the villain as he addresses the remaining 1-A students. "Thirteen isn't injured too badly. It's just a lot of blood. You need to get them out of here if you can. I'll take care of this guy."

"Are you a hero?" one of the kids behind him asks. It's obvious by the shaking of their voice that they're only trying to sound brave.

He glances back at them for only a moment, red and green eyes doing their best to reassure them. "Are the eyes not enough of a giveaway?" He sounds more confident than he feels. He looks again for the glint of metal, he needs to know if his grappling hook is still attached. "Pied Piper, aspiring vigilante extraordinaire, at your service." He catches a glimpse of the dangling cord dragging on the ground just beneath the swirling mist. "Well, I say aspiring but I've been doing this for a while now." Izuku had left his grappling hook still attached to the villain, but whether or not it was still attached had been up to chance before now, he'd need a distraction if he wanted to even get near it though.

Thankfully the distraction he needs comes in the form of exploding palms smelling of burnt sugar.

The villain rocks forward at the explosion from behind, wavering just enough for the vigilante to catch a glimpse of Kirishima and what he recognizes as Endeavor's son rushing back towards the building.

The stench of burning sugar sickens him, but he pushes through it, diving for the grappling hook's cord while the villain is focused elsewhere. Izuku wrenches the rope down the moment he gets his hands on it, though the villain is quicker to respond this time.

A portal opens beneath his feet as another round of explosions go off, but the boy still hasn't let go of the rope. The man jerks backwards, surprised by the sudden increase of weight. Midoriya dangles over the obsidian abyss, the entirety of his weight now resting solely on the shoulders(?) of the villain above him.

A large explosion from the otherside blasts the villain closer to the

ground, plunging Midoriya entirely into the portal. The other end of the warpgate reveals itself to be a good two stories above where he'd been. From here he can see where Bakugou's fighting.

His grip on the rope tightens.

Below him a large swath of ice erupts from the hole in the wall. This is the last thing he takes notice of before the warp gate closes above him, severing his life line.

There's a moment where he feels suspended in the air, the rope that he's still clinging to so desperately snaking back towards him as gravity calls it back to earth. Shouts echo below him as he too follows it, obeying the laws of gravity.

A one story fall has always been enough to make his knees protest even when he distributes the weight of landing into a roll. From this height he's more than likely to leave with a snapped bone or two. From this height he'll become a liability.

He's just passed the one story mark when there's a sharp slap to the top half of his face. He recoils from the blow as the violent pull of gravity disappears just as suddenly as it had come. He blinks sluggishly at the girl hanging suspended beside him, her face screwed up in concentration. She mutters a quiet, "Release," before they both fall unceremoniously the rest of the way to the ground where another student with multiple arms manages to catch them both.

The girl looks a little green as they're set back on their feet. She turns to look at him and a plan immediately begins formulating in his head. "Thank you," he mutters, glancing between the two students. "But I'm going to have to ask for your help one more time."

Bakugou and the Todoroki boy are still going up against the villain. Large swaths of ice are being sent at him only to disappear through portals, and appear elsewhere. One falls from the ceiling towards the forest below and another by the stairs, cracking the concrete as it tumbles towards the plaza.

Midoriya gets a running start, sliding an escrima stick out as he uses the boy's many limbs as a stair step up and sticks a bare hand out for a high five from the girl from earlier. He can tell the moment her quirk activates, his body once again weightless as the boy below him launches him up towards the occupied mist villain like he's pushing

little more than air. A nearby blast from Bakugou knocks him a little off course, but Izuku swallows down the lump in his throat, trying to position himself as best as he can before he's finally where he needs to be.

"Now!" He calls back at the girl. He's higher up than he'd originally planned to be, but he's above the villain. So when the girl releases her quirk, he plummets almost directly towards the warpgate's hazy eyes as they slowly look up at him in surprise. Midoriya's feet slam into the villain's armor plating, driving them towards the ground. He reaches down with his free hand to grip the metal for a better hold before once again plunging his escrima stick into the armor, shocking the villain. He keeps his thumb smashed into the button, sending charge after charge into the armor plating until the escrima stick finally runs out of juice.

The fall isn't nearly as high this time and he makes a smooth landing roll without any more assistance from the girl. He stuffs the dead escrima stick back into his belt, forcing himself to remember its out of charges.

The vigilante relaxes somewhat seeing the unconscious villain in front of him before turning to look at the remaining students.

There's a sound of cracking explosions behind him and he turns to find Katsuki surging towards him, rushing at him with sparking palms. Izuku freezes, pupils dilating in unadulterated fear.

"Bakugou no!" one of the girls cries, "He helped us!"

Midoriya has faced worse, fought worse. He's *died.* So *why, why does he always find himself cowering in the face of those sickly sweet explosions.*

A wall of ice rises between the two of them before Bakugou reaches him, effectively cutting him off. Todoroki spares Izuku a short nod before he speaks, talking to Bakugou, "Calm down. He's not the enemy."

The two go back and forth for a moment before Kirishima also steps in, doing his part to calm the volatile teenager.

Midoriya takes this time to recompose himself and steady the shaking in his hands. He looks back at those remaining. "You all should hurry and get out while you can, take Thirteen with you and make sure you get them some medical treatment as soon as possible. That villain should be out cold for a while, but I'd suggest getting out of here

quickly. I'll go and help your other teacher, so don't worry about him."

"Like hell I'm leaving it to you," Bakugou snarls, stalking around the ice wall towards him. But there's a distant lack of cracking palms this time. "This is my chance to show those villains just who they'll be facing in the future."

"I'll be going with you as well," Todoroki says, meeting his eyes, gray and blue against red and green. "I won't stand idly by."

Midoriya can't deny that the two of them will graduate to be powerhouses in the hero world. He eventually nods reluctantly, not that disagreeing with them would've changed their decision. "Just don't get hurt. Eraserhead'll kill me if you do, he wanted me to protect you all."

"Aizawa Sensei said that?" one girl asks.

Midoriya only nods silently in response, eying Bakugou warily. He keeps his face turned away from him.

"Like I've got any plans of lettin' those bastards one up me."

He looks at the rest of the students, eyes pausing on Kirishima longer than they should before jerking away. "The rest of you should go. Most of you aren't trained yet, you could get hurt. Plus, it's a slim chance, but the others might need your help if the villains have reinforcements outside."

They share a few reluctant glances with one another before they finally start moving. The girl that'd saved him earlier sends him one last determined nod before jogging over to help with Thirteen, relieving the hero of their weight. Thirteen's head is drooping, but it's obvious that they're trying to stay conscious as he can see it bob every few moments from the corner of his eye. He pulls on the glove he'd removed earlier back on before stooping to pick up his staff, giving it a twirl.

He glances back at Bakugou and Todoroki. "Let's kick some ass then."

The way down the stairs is much quicker than it had been going up. Bakugou blasts himself down into the plaza as Todoroki forms a slide made of ice down half the staircase that both of them are able to use.

Midoriya makes a graceless landing at the bottom of the stairs as Todoroki continues on, gliding across the battlefield and freezing villains as he goes.

Izuku can see Aizawa from where he is, fighting against a woman with a mutation quirk.

“Behind you!” the boy calls out when he spies someone creeping up behind the hero.

Eraserhead wastes no time in spinning on his heel, hair floating and capture weapon whipping out to bind the man’s limbs. He and Izuku share a brief moment of eye contact before Midoriya nods at the teacher. A silent, *they’re safe,* being conveyed between the two.

A loud succession of explosions go off to his left. Bakugou's voice rises amid the chaos, “Die!”

He's not as strong as Aizawa or Todoroki or Bakugou, even with the near year of experience he has under his belt he can't even hold a candle to them. But, he'll do what he can to stop the villain's he's able to.

He picks off those scattering the edge of the plaza. The ones who don't recognize him never see his attack coming and make for easy work. The ones who do, like the woman in front of him, as are always first to attack.

Her palms radiate thick waves of suffocating heat. It hits him hard, burns his eyes and his lungs every time he's forced to breathe, but he pushes through, trying to get in close. He readies an attack aimed at her chin when the heat suddenly increases tenfold.

He feels like he's being roasted over an open flame.

His winter gear isn’t meant for this kind of heat. He stumbles back trying to come up with a new plan of action.

“Can't handle the heat?” the woman laughs, stepping closer.

The heat gets even worse. He can't breathe, the air searing his lungs, burning his eyes. He can’t see. Midoriya turns his face from her, heart threatening to make a run for it. He's unable to stand the burning of his cheeks. He shouldn’t turn his back to her, he knows this logically, but he can't… It's hard to think straight. Fear clogs his throat, fog clogs his thoughts.

The fear he's feeling is abnormal, ten fold of what it usually is. He knows its not normal, he knows he's been in worse situations, scarier situations. But, he can't control the pounding in his chest.

Is there a secondary quirk?

The heat rises as she rushes towards him, drawing closer, and before he can turn back around an iron hot hand sears into the back of his neck.

Midoriya lets out a terrible cry of pain as the fabric of his hoodie melts beneath her touch, dripping onto his skin and threatening to fuse there. He jerks forward, thoughts consumed in the fiery pain and fear. He can't breathe so close to her, he can't see. He thinks he's going to throw up from the fear clogging his throat alone. He pinches his eyes closed and stumbles forward blindly.

There's the telltale sound of nitroglycerin fueled explosions ringing in his ears and at first he thinks it's his mind turning on him, only there to further amplify his fear. But, they continue to draw steadily closer until there's a cry of pain from the villain behind him as Bakugou barrels into her side.

He spares the vigilante a brief glance before his eyes scan the nearby shrubbery. His gaze lands on someone hidden within the bushes and a menacing grin takes over his face. "So you're the bastard fuckin' with my head." The teen blasts himself into the wooded area, giving chase to whoever he'd managed to spot.

The heat dissipates quickly after the woman's taken out and the panicky fog in his head dissolves with it. *So it was a quirk.*

The nape of his neck burns terribly, worse than any of Bakugou's attacks ever have. He takes in a deep, shuddering breath as he turns back towards the center of the plaza to take in the situation. He finds Eraserhead first, engaging in a fight with the white-haired villain from before. He sees Todoroki next, still battling fiercely on the opposite side of the plaza.

He looks back towards the teacher who's right arm now dangles uselessly at his side as he fights off two other villains. His eyes widen.

(It's true that death spares no one.)

"Aizawa!" Midoriya's voice cracks as the hulking monster from the warehouse appears behind the teacher. It only takes one hand to

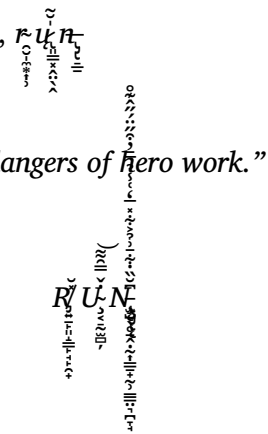
effectively break the hero. He's slammed harshly into the ground, the force of the impact forming a spider web of cracks around his head. Midoriya can see blood already beginning to pool beneath him, soaking into the ground, staining it crimson. The monster snaps Aizawa's elbow like one would a thin branch, crushing the other with his grip alone.

There's a strong part of Izuku that wants to throw up.

"The dangers of hero work… are simply too high."

His rejection letter flashes in his mind, the words printed there in ink as red as Aizawa's blood. *This is what they'd been talking about.*

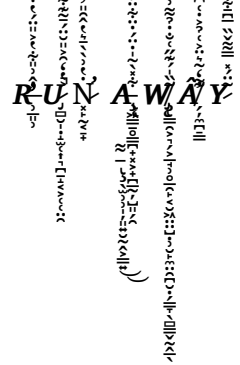
His mind screams for him to, *r u n*



"The dangers of hero work."

"The dangers"

Midoriya bares his teeth, fear swirling in his eyes. He doesn't think, and he figures it's for the best considering what he's doing.



Izuku ignores the voice, sprinting towards Aizawa's limp body still trapped beneath the beast's body. His eyes hone in on the creature's brain. He spies Todoroki on the other side of the plaza, skating his way towards the downed hero with a dangerous look on his face. "Todoroki!" He screams, catching the boy's momentary attention as they both rush towards the scene. "Freeze it in place!"

It's exposed brain is the only possible weak point the vigilante can find in the time it takes him to close the distance between them. Todoroki's ice slides up the beast's legs, freezing it in place the best he can while avoiding Aizawa. Midoriya slides the charged escrima stick out, readying himself to claw his way up the monster's now unguarded back and send an electric pulse straight to its brain.

But before he can make it more than three feet from the creature, it releases Aizawa, breaking free of the ice.

"Nomu. Take care of him."

In the time it takes for Midoriya to blink, the monster appears next to him. The boy's head ticks to the side in time to see the beasts' fist aiming for his side. He makes a sad attempt of trying to block the blow with his staff before its fist slams into him ruthlessly. He feels something crack, several somethings crack, beneath the force.

Pain explodes through him, frying his nerves, darkening his vision.

His world is engulfed in tar.

This is the boy's third 'death'.

Chapter End Notes

I TOLD EVERYONE ON TUMBLR THAT YOU WOULD HATE FOR THIS CLIFFHANGER ADKFJHASDKFJASDLKF LMAOOO

In other news I'm posting this chapter a little earlier than I usually would because I had an incident involving mother, in condensed form she wanted a link to this fic so I was forced to edit some things out and post a good portion on wattpad but I need it to look real since I've been bragging to her about all of the support I'd received on here and upon posting about my problem and tumblr and such everyone was so willing to help out and really made my day, so I wanted to show my appreciation the only way I really know how.

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter! If you want to know more about the ongoing problem i'm having with my mother I'll leave a link to the post at the bottom of this so you can help if you want! Thank you all again for the continuing support! I love you all so much! Until next time!

https://askpiedpiper.tumblr.com/post/622941921536507904/gravity-black-hole

Neutron Star

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter art:

blackholeca

helen-renee

halomask

Waking up is difficult. His entire body is nothing but one large fire ball of pain. It's all consuming. His everything hurts.

The sun in this chest is small, wavering, more a dying white dwarf than his usual red giant.

He stares at the ceiling for a long while, trying to gather the bits and pieces of himself back together. He's still inside the USJ, still somewhere in the plaza. He keeps his breaths short and shallow, trying his best to minimize the pain. His ears ring loudly, eyes blurred, but he can still hear and see bits and pieces of the battle still going on from where he is.

Midoriya Izuku has done what he didn't want to do.

He's become a liability.

He has to get up, he has to help, has to do something.

Pushing himself up hurts beyond measure, more so than he thought it would. His vision goes dark, cutting in and out. It brings tears to his eyes unbidden, streaming down his cheeks and further obscuring his view of the battlefield.

He needs to help.

He keeps his breathing slow, hissing out air through his teeth. He wants to lay back down, wants to give up. Instead he staggers forward.

He can't fight, but… His vision clears enough to catch sight of

Eraserhead's broken body sprawled across the ground. "Aizawa," the name comes out with a croak.

He needs to get the man out.

He's much farther from the hero than he had originally been. He's covered in dust and blood trickles from somewhere on his forehead, mingling with his sweat and tears. The walk over is agonizingly slow, but no one makes to stop him. Shouts and explosions ring in his ears, just loud enough for him to hear over the blood rushing through them. His hand hovers above his injured side as he stumbles his way over, the world around him wavering in and out, sending bouts of nausea rolling through him.

The boy makes to step over an unconscious villain in the way, but trips over him instead. He falls to his hands and knees, the impact sending an impossible amount of pain flaring through his side as he feels his ribs *shift* . Acid burns its way up his throat and he scrambles to tear the mask off his face before he throws up what little food remains from last night's dinner.

A nearby voice booms throughout the building, making the splitting headache that's started up ten times worse. But, the voice is one he recognizes and–

"All Might! Behind you!"

He looks up, watching the vicious battle taking place near the plaza's center. Yes that's right. He'd recognize that familiar silhouette anywhere. All Might's here, everything would be fine now.

The vigilante lurches back up, legs weak and pain painting the edges of his vision a perpetual black. He wipes the sick from his mouth as he slips his mask back on. He just needs to help Aizawa and then he can leave. He can go home and get better and apologize to Reo for breaking the new grappling hook.

His vision clears just long enough for Izuku to see it, All Might's trademarked smile turned down in a grimace. A lodestar in the lives of so many stands before him, fighting *for* him against the monster that had taken Midoriya out with a single blow. The boy can't help but stare at the man, in awe of the hero's raw power as he matches the monster that had broken him blow for blow.

He turns away from the fighting, staggering his way back towards Aizawa. The pool of blood around the hero's head is larger now, darker. Both arms are mangled and what little of his face Midoriya can see from this position makes him sick, more acid threatening to work its way up his throat. He turns his head for a moment, eyes closed and teeth grit as he tries desperately to recompose himself.

It takes a gust of wind from one of All Might's punches for him to turn back towards his teacher and roll him over where he can get a hand under his knees and one behind his back. It hurts like hell, worse than when he tripped, worse than when he'd *died.* The boy lets out an agonised cry as he stands, lifting the man up in his arms. More fat tears spring to his eyes, further blurring his vision, and leaving trails through the dust on his face.

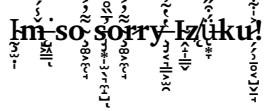
The dangers of hero work… are simply too high.

"Shut up," he grits out, shifting his hold on the hero.

The pain is excruciating, his vision tunneling when he takes his first step towards the stairs.

We encourage you to apply for one of the other courses that we offer.

"Shut up."



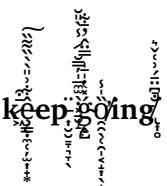
“Mom…” The boy bares his teeth, continuing his slow march towards the stairs. He doesn’t know how he’ll get up them in this state, but he has to. For Aizawa’s sake, for his mother’s sake, he has to get up them.

He takes it one step at a time, the wind pressure from the battle behind him pushing him on. Bakugou’s continuing explosions and the growing nip in the air let him know that both Todoroki and Katsuki are still up and kicking. He can barely see, most of his vision blackened or sparkling with stars. He’s made it part of the way up the stairs when he feels the earth quake beneath him and turns to look over his shoulder. Through his tunneling vision he can see the monster embedded in the concrete, rubble and dust fogging the area. All Might strikes the ground beside it, sending up another cloud of dust, his clothes torn to hell, but feet planted firmly.

“Go beyond! Plus Ultra!”

It takes only a second before the beast is airborne again, propelled by All Might’s punch. Its body collides with the ceiling, tearing a hole through the roof. The impact sends a rumbling shock wave through the building, threatening to unbalance him.

While he’s looking away, a swirl of black mist disappears from the entrance.



For once Midoriya listens to the voice, following it’s instructions and continuing his way up the steps. He forces his breathing to match his pace as he forces his way up the stairs. His sun wavers, shuddering in his chest.

He’s a little less than halfway to the top when they appear, shining more brilliantly than All Might himself. He almost collapses then and there, legs ready to give out long before he’d made it this far. Exhaustion and pain make it hard for him to think clearly anymore.

“Sorry we’re late!”

Midoriya takes another desperate step forward as Present Mic looks down at him with a smile as bright as the one he’d offered Midoriya’s class on their first day.

Yamada is the first to spot the kid, ready to unleash his quirk on any remaining villains in his path before he sees him. He’s beat to hell, clinging to the bloodied form of Aizawa between his arms like he’d been assigned the task by God.

Hizashi has to resist the urge to immediately run down to retrieve the man.

The kid is young, probably the same age as one of UA’s students if he were to guess. He doesn’t recognize the boy as anyone from Shouta’s class, but he *does* recognize him. *Pied Piper.* The young vigilante Aizawa has mentioned from time to time after coming home from patrol.

There are fat tears rolling down his cheeks, and pain paints agony across his eyes. There’s a thin stream of blood trailing from his brow and dust mottles what he can see of his face and clothes.

Yamada approaches the boy slowly, arms extended in a sign of peace. When he doesn’t show any fear or resistance Mic takes another step forward. It’s slow going, and he can feel the stares of the others on his back as some of them rush around the scene towards the few remaining villains below.

Despite the chaos the boy still hasn’t moved from his spot.

He sees the kid sway on his feet and hurries the rest of the way down the steps, gently taking Shouta from the boy’s arms. Mic’s brows twist inward with a look of horror when he sees the man’s face, but his expression is nothing compared to the grief the kid’s wearing. Hizashi watches the boy’s chest convulse once before his legs fold in on themselves and he lets out the most gut wrenching sob the hero’s ever heard in his life.

Mic quickly glances over his shoulder, catching Snipe’s gaze. He seems to understand the silent message as he jogs down to meet them.

(This will be the boy's last act of heroism for a long while.)

Nezu contemplates the situation at hand, eyeing Snipe as he scoops the crying boy up into his arms. He doesn't fight it, but he can hear the boy's sobs collapsing into a series of pained wheezes as the hero follows Yamada outside towards the paramedics. The vigilante's signature staff is missing, but Nedzu recognizes the apparel from the news he's seen about him.

He watches as the rest of the UA staff spread out within the building, taking care of any remaining villains. Most are already unconscious, others just beginning to come back around as heroes flood the area. A hoard of officers storm in behind them, rounding up criminals that have already been subdued.

Outside, several ambulances have arrived, Hizashi rushing Shouta to the nearest one as a paramedic hurries towards the teen-like figure in Snipe's care.

"Bring him to the truck," she instructs, the hero gently setting Piper down where she directs. She pulls out a small flashlight from her pocket, flashing it in the kid's eyes.

"Can you tell me what your name is?"

Snipe watches as the vigilante gently shakes his head, tears slipping down his cheeks.

"Can you tell me where you are?"

"USJ," he croaks. His voice is pained, both his words and his labored breathing distorted by his mask.

Another paramedic joins her soon after. "It's possible he could've sustained internal injuries we'll need to get him back asap."

The woman nods, grabbing a few of the supplies they'll need.

Snipe steps out of the ambulance. "He's a vigilante so make sure you use proper precautions when possible," the hero tells them, nodding as he walks off, leaving the boy in their care.

"Grab the quirk suppressants then."

“Already on it.”

There’s a small pop that goes off behind the hero and he turns to find thick smoke flooding out the back of the ambulance. The paramedics shout and a pained cry goes out as Piper hauls himself to his feet unseen. Snipe spins on his heel, preparing himself for a villain attack. But, it's only the paramedics that stumble out of the green cloud, coughing on the smoke.

The display draws everyone’s eyes, but he and Yamada are the only heroes outside, all other police and hero personnel busy rounding up the remaining villains.

Snipe eases the medics towards the approaching Yamada as he steps cautiously into the smoke, making his way towards the back of the ambulance where he’d left the boy.

“We got the quirk suppressants in him, but I think he must’ve used some sort of smoke bomb,” one of the medics coughs from behind him. “He seems to be in a bad condition, please be careful with him if you can!”

When he makes it to the ambulance the vigilante is already gone.

Everything hurts, but Midoriya pushes on. He can't be caught here, this can't be how he's found. He still has to see Eri safe and Overhaul paying for his crimes. He has more people to save.

He stumbles his way through the forest, headed towards none other than UA itself. He slips his phone out of his pocket, dialing Reo's number with clumsy hands.

The sound of the school's alarm whines through the speaker the moment his friend answers the call. “Izuku? Wh–”

“Is the school being evacuated right now?” the vigilante gasps, leaning against a tree for momentary support, black threatening the edges of his vision.

“Is this anything to do with you? What happened?”

“I need a UA uniform,” the boy breathes, ignoring the questions. “I don’t care if its a gym one. I don't care whose.” He pushes away from the tree, staggering forward. “It doesn't matter if it doesn't fit right. I

just need you to meet me out front at the left edge of the forest."

There's a loud rustling noise that crackles through the speaker before Reo's voice cuts through. "Are you being followed?" He asks in a hushed whisper.

"Probably," Izuku pants. "Normally I'd make a run for it, but I've taken a bit of a beating." He hisses out a pained breath.

"Is it a hospital level beating?"

"Well, I'm still standing."

Aizawa's not.

His chest shudders, and he forces himself to blink away the vision of death.

He could already be dead.

"He's not."

"Izuku? That doesn't reassure me. I've got my gym uniform though. I'll be there soon. Be careful."

"Hey," Midoriya cuts in quickly before Reo can hang up, "Bring some scissors or something. I…" he takes a moment to reign in his breathing, "I don't know if I'll be able to just pull this hoodie off."

His friend is quiet for a long moment. "Got it."

Reo hadn't been expecting Midoriya to be in any sort of good condition. But the pallor of his friend's face immediately sets him on edge. "Izuku," he breathes, staring at the younger teen helplessly.

Midoriya offers him a wavering grin with eyes that have seen far too much.

The boy is covered in blood and dust and sweat and *wounds.* Bruises and scrapes and *burns.* He watches his friend's eyes flutter shut tiredly, unsteady on his feet.

Midoriya lets him inspect the melted fabric on his neck, and he grimaces. It smells horrible, the phantom sizzle of skin ringing in his ears when he looks at it.

“I’m definitely going to have to cut you out of it,” Reo says quietly, studying the damage with a dark look in his eyes. “You can’t just peel stuff like this off.”

“Do it quick then. There’s a chance they’ll send Hound Dog after me and I'll be easy to track down if I don’t get into the city soon.”

Reo nods grimly, taking the scissors he’d nabbed from the support department to the back of the hoodie. He cuts gingerly around the melted part of the fabric, leaving it attached to the back of the teen’s neck. “There.” Upon Midoriya’s request he cuts a long line through the entire back of the hoodie, gently peeling it off the boy like a jacket.

Izuku carefully slips Reo’s gym uniform on over his bulletproof vest as his friend stuffs the remains of Piper’s hoodie into his backpack. He turns his back to the boy and Midoriya swallows back the urge to throw up. Another violent bout of nausea rolls through him as he shifts his body in ways that it’s no longer willing to shift to. He blinks away his blackening vision, forcing himself to focus on the present as he zips the front of the shirt up. The school's alarm bells mix with the whine of police sirens and the phantom sound of yelling in his head.

His hands shake, but he’s quick to busy himself by removing his gloves and mask and undoing his belt. He needs to focus on something other than the images floating through his head.

Reo looks up at him, eyeing his shaking hands with rising concern. “You okay?”

Those words are all it takes for the vigilante to crumble. “No,” Midoriya gasps out, the constrictive feeling in his chest finally overwhelming him, voices winning out. He bows his head, teeth biting painfully into his lip. Blood coats the back of his eyelids.

I failed.

He chokes back a sob, trying to steady himself when the pain in his side gets worse. “Eraserhead’s hurt… the kind of hurt that *kills* people.”

Reo goes still, gym pants clenched tightly between his hands.

“That… That *thing* broke him so easily.”

“Izuku,” Reo whispers, his name is quiet but firm on the boy's lips. He glances into the woods, scanning the empty spaces between trees. “We need to get you out of here. That has to come first right now.”

Midoriya stares down at his feet with blurring vision, tears colliding with the tops of his boots.

“We need to go. You said it yourself.” Reo holds the pants out to him. Midoriya accepts them gingerly before Reo stuffs the rest of Midoriya’s gear into his backpack. “I'm sorry. But, It's dangerous to stay here for much longer.”

Izuku can only nod quietly, slipping off his boots and stepping into the gym pants as best as he can. It agitates his side further, but he bears with it as Reo helps him pull on an extra pair of gym shoes that he ties for the younger teen.

Midoriya’s thankful. He doubts he would've been able to tie them himself.

After that it's easy enough to disappear into the crowd of students being ushered out the gates by teachers. “My mom keeps our first aid kit well stocked,” Izuku mutters as they board the first train back towards their apartments.

Reo nods silently as his friend leans against him for support.

Midoriya can tell the adrenaline that'd kept him moving up until now has worn off. Nightmares haunt him every time he so much as blinks, crushed bones and blood splatters flickering back to life. He keeps his breathing shallow, but it's quick to make him light headed. Goose flesh rises along his arms and legs and he prays that no one looks too closely and notices the blood and burn and bruises and dust and—
The train glides to a halt, Reo steadying him as he sways on his feet. He can feel a fever seeing in.

“Come on,” he murmurs. “Let's get you patched up.”

In the center of the plaza Piper's staff lays bent and bloodied, covered in dust. Nezu eyes it from the top of the stairs, watching as the last of the villains are rounded up, his eyesight better than that of his human counterparts. Snipe keeps a watchful eye beside him.

“So he got away?” Nezu asks.

“For now. He's heavily injured though. I wouldn't be surprised if we find him unconscious in some alley within the next few hours. He won't make it too far alone.”

“Who says he'll be alone?” The principal folds his paws neatly behind his back. “I doubt such a young child would be without some sort of confidante in his situation, someone he trusts. If Piper comes back from this then I believe that much will be obvious,” Nezu explains. “Heroism inflicts more than just physical damage. I doubt he would've lasted this long without someone he could talk with.”

Snipe remains quiet for a moment, but doesn't offer his input into the topic, choosing instead to move on. “The main culprits of all this also escaped,” he tells him, “You don't think the two are related do you?”

“It's certainly possible. From what Aizawa has discussed with me before he at least attempted to apply for UA before being rejected. It could be a sort of revenge. But, looking at the evidence before us I believe it's highly unlikely. I assume you're thinking the same?”

Snipe hums his confirmation.

Nezu watches as the last of 1-A’s students are ushered up the final stretch of stairs. There's a dark look in both their eyes.

Snipe breaks away to escort them the rest of the way out to the waiting paramedics.

“We’ll need to look into fortifying our security measures,” Nezu murmurs to himself, turning to follow them out. “It appears I've been neglecting it for too long.”

Midoriya points tiredly to where his spare apartment key is so Reo can grab it as he rests against the wall. He feels nauseous again, feet unsteady beneath him.

Trust means everything between friends. That's the only reason Midoriya and Reo have been able to become so close.

They trusted each other to keep their secrets.

Tsukauchi glances at him as he unlocks the door. “Is your neck the worst of it?”

Izuku croaks out a quiet, “Yeah,” as he slips out of his shoes at the door. He stumbles a little, catching himself on the wall. Pain flares through him, vision darkening.

He covers his mouth with a hand, staggering towards the bathroom and leaving Reo to hurry after him.

He throws up in the sink, tears blurring his eyes as his stomach revolts. His side is on fire, each shuddering breath and wracking cough fanning the infernal flames. Even dying hadn’t hurt this much. His mind is coated in Eraserhead’s blood. His body knows nothing but pain.

Reo rests a reassuring hand on his back, whispering words of assurance over the hissing voices in his head.

He's dead. He's dead. He's dead.

“You're okay. It's over.”

He's dead. He's dead. He's dead.

“He'll be fine. They'll take care of him.”

He's dead. He's dead. He's dead.

“You did what you could.”

It wasn't enough.

“You’ll be okay.”

I’ll die like this.

Midoriya sits himself gingerly down on his bed as Reo hands him several pain pills. He’s managed to calm back down, but he feels absolutely exhausted now. “Take these. I think we have something stronger at my place, but I'll have to check later.”

“Thank you,” Izuku mutters quietly, greedily swallowing them along with the entire glass of water he’s given.

Midoriya works so control his pained expression as Reo helps him out of the top half of the gym uniform. “Do you want to take your vest off?”

“No,” he murmurs hoarsely. He can't let Reo see the extent of the damage he's taken. He can't tell the boy about the fire in his ribs. He can't tell him about just how much it hurts to move, to breathe, *to lie to him* .

He'll drag me to the hospital if he finds out. If I go to the hospital I'll be caught. Even if I managed to survive the Detective's questioning, if I end up in the hospital with the same wounds Piper sustained… I just need to last a few days.

“I just… I wanna keep it on for a little while longer,” Izuku whispers. “It won't get in the way, will it?”

Reo studies his friend's back with growing worry. He's never known the boy to fear something so greatly that his gear becomes a safety blanket. *Whatever you did hurt you again, more than just physically.* “It won't.” *I told you not to get in over your head. I told you to let someone else handle it if it's too much.* “Just try not to fall asleep in it, it’ll be bad if your mom finds you in it.” Reo's fists clench in his lap. Everything's far from good. “I'll get started then.”

“Thank you,” Izuku murmurs.

Reo has always thought he knows too much.

For once he doesn't know enough.

(This is the beginning of the death of trust and faith.)

Chapter End Notes

> The long awaited chapter □□□ it was harder to write than I anticipated but I hope you all enjoyed it gdjshskdbdnd until next time ☘

Stellar Evolution

Chapter Notes

Fanart!!

goinggoose

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“It'll definitely scar,” Reo sighs, gently smoothing a bandage over the back of Izuku’s neck. “I just don't know how badly.”

Midoriya lets his eyes close tiredly. His neck burns horribly and every breath stokes the fire in his side. He just wants to sleep.

“I'll be back tomorrow,” his friend murmurs. “Since you're pretending to be sick I can just tell your mom I'm bringing you your school work or something. I'll try and get some better pain pills as well.”

“Thank you,” Midoriya whispers. “You really saved me.”

“You'd’ve done the same thing for me,” Reo grunts as he pushes himself up. He gathers his things, pausing at the door. “Will you be alright on your own?” he asks softly, looking back at him.

Midoriya offers the older teen a thumbs up that lies without the need for words.

Reo sighs, a small smile twitching at his lips at the gesture.

He doesn't press him for answers just yet despite the questions Izuku can see broiling in those amber eyes of his. *I'm sorry,* Midoriya whispers in his head. *Though to be fair did tell me never to come to you with a broken arm, and this is probably just a little worse than that.*

Izuku waits till he hears the front door lock before he carefully peels away the velcro straps of the bulletproof vest. It’s easier to remove than his other gear.

He's scared to look down at the damage his side’s taken, scared that hiding it could be the decision that kills him for good. Emerald eyes find his injured side engulfed in a brilliant red. Midoriya lets out a

shuttered breath, already in borderline tears from a single glance at it. He knows his ribs are broken, knows his condition is bad, knows one wrong move could puncture his lung or liver or artery or some other vital part of his body.

He bites his lip, looking away from it before slipping on a t-shirt Reo left out for him.

I don't want to die.

"Don't you?" the voice in his head laughs, *"That's what your actions all point towards. What will you find by succumbing to your wounds in the dead of night? Glory? Honor?"* it chuckles, sharpened teeth glinting in the dark.

"I've never felt a need for glory," the boy wheezes, slipping beneath his sheets. *What use is glory to a quirkless teen?*

"You too once wished for it."

"The kid you're thinking of died long ago," Midoriya breathes, easing himself onto his good side. His All Might posters smile at him brightly, reassuring him with lies that tell him everything's okay, that he's safe.

In truth he wasn't. And neither was Aizawa or Thirteen or any of class 1-A. He doesn't know what happened to any of them, not after they'd gotten out, not after he'd been forced to run away. Aizawa could be dead. Any of them could be dead.

Midoriya releases a shaky breath, tears curling at the corners of his eyes as he lets them fall closed. He can't tell if they're a result of his mental state or the fire consuming him. Either way he's unconscious within minutes.

What sleep Midoriya gets is accompanied by night terrors. This first night brings with it a dark portal that yawns open before him, a swirling obsidian that consumes that which comes too near. It drags him in with all the force of a black hole, tearing at his atoms, undoing him. The more he fights against it the more he is destroyed.

But a hand emerges from the void, clawing its way out of the darkness defying its crushing gravity. It reaches out with the intent to mutilate.

Midoriya has known much suffering from the likes of hands like

these.

The strangely unfamiliar voice of Overhaul echoes from the portal, *“Power never suited you.”* The hand laches carefully around his wrist. *“Glory is honorable only to those selfish enough to desire it.”*

(He won't remember this dream.)

Napht

@m0thh0urs

rip **Pied Piper** he's not dead i just miss him

2:37am · 4/13/32 · Twitter Web App

4 Retweets **23** Likes

> **Bean Thief** @rattlinbooog · 2h
>
> Replying to @**m0thh0urs**
>
> fr tho 😭😭😭 i haven't heard anything about
>
> him in the last few days let's hope he isn't
>
> actually dead hsjshsksvskshs
>
> 💬 🔁 1 ♡ 5

> **Napht** @m0thh0urs · 1h
>
> Replying to @**rattlinbooog**
>
> I would CRY
>
> 💬 🔁 ♡ 3

snipe's stolen gun @iconic_icon

Replying to @**m0thh0urs**

where is our resident agent of chaos we are

a city in NEED

♡ 2

sitaray @kahaania · 6m

Replying to @**m0thh0urs**

PLEASE THIS SCARED ME SO BAD DO

N O T DO THAT TO ME AGAIN 😭😭

♡ 1

In the days following the USJ incident Midoriya is forced to stay home. Reo brings him a small handful of stronger pain medication, explaining to him how many to take and when. But, even these are only able to help so much. A fever accompanies his wounds, and as infuriating as it is for Midoriya, neither Inko nor Reo give his bedridden state a second thought because of it.

"They've closed the school until tomorrow so they can revamp the security system. The press have obviously been having a field day with it, but…" Reo trails off, clearly reluctant to pry. Midoriya watches as the teen leans back, starting at the ceiling. "I still don't know how you were involved in any of it. I've already heard everything they're saying on the news several times over by now. But… none of it even mentions you."

Izuku takes a moment to gather himself before speaking. "I thought it was Overhaul," Midoriya whispers, "That gathering I told you about… I thought it was Overhaul's doing."

Reo raises his head, studying him from the desk chair, eyes flickering over the fifteen-year-old's face.

"I told your uncle about it like you told me to, but they moved their meeting last minute. They had no way of knowing where it'd moved."

Izuku does his best to clear his head of all other things, does his best to even his breathing, to control his pain. “I had a lead that could help me find the new place. I was on the phone with Tsukauchi-san while I was following up on it before the signal cut out, probably the work of a quirk looking back on it… I was able to give him the general location of where I thought the meeting was, but I still didn’t have the exact location so I just kept following them… I–I thought I’d be able to go back once I found the place. I thought I wouldn’t have to get involved.”

“But it wasn’t Overhaul,” Reo breathes.

Midoriya’s head dips down, studying his hands. “It wasn't. I didn’t… I didn’t realize what I was walking into,” he chokes out. “I thought it’d just be a meeting so I was going to stick around for a bit. I wanted to see if I could find out anything they were planning before I left… Then they opened the warp gate.”

Izuku doesn’t tell him everything. He skips over the parts that are hard to tell, bypasses anything about Aizawa after he’d gotten injured. He pretends he didn't know Bakugou, pretends his bones hadn't broken beneath the fist of a monster.

Midoriya Izuku has had a lot of practice lying, such is the nature of vigilantism. He specializes in half truths and stories just detailed enough to be believable.

That's why Inko only believes he’s sick. That's why Reo believes his spiraling health is the cause of coincidence or mental trauma or literally anything other than what Izuku doesn’t want him to know. Because he trusts Midoriya, because he continues to trust Midoriya despite all of the lies he's told and the promises he's failed to keep.

Midoriya Izuku has had a lot of practice lying, so naturally he’s become a good liar.

That night brings with it the woman Bakugou had saved him from. There's a smog that rises around him, tinged orange with distant fires. He watches as she raises a hand, oppressive heat waves rolling from her palms. Her presence alone is enough to suck all the moisture from the air.

In the dream her quirk is more powerful, the heat hotter, the pain more intense. From her mouth comes Bakugou’s voice, “Still trying to

play hero, *Deku?* ” Midoriya brings an elbow up to cover his mouth and nose, doing his best to keep breathing.

More villains emerge from the wavering heat, faces distorted or simply not there, his memories of them confined to their quirks and what they could do. The heat gets worse, it blinds him, scorches his lungs as more villains appear. It’s impossible to breathe, much less fight back against any of them.

A hand rises to caress his cheek, fingers searing into his skin. Disembodied lips pause at the cusp of his ear. Reo’s voice slips through them. They whisper, “Why didn't you tell me? Why did you *lie?* ”

And Midoriya weeps, crying, “I'm sorry. I'm so sorry!” The cheek that is his but also isn't melts beneath the hand and Izuku watches from an outsider's point of view as his(?) body falls to its knees. It continues crying, continues begging for forgiveness that it has no right to.

Pied Piper Videos To Watch While Your Dino Nuggies Are Cooking

2,749,042 views

4,735 comments

Dorito Moth - 1 day ago

3:48 IM CACKLING HOW'D HE GET THE SPIKES OF HIS BOOTS STUCK LIKE THAT HDNSGSKSVSNVS HE'S LUCKY HE MANAGED TO GET AWAY GDNSSVNSVSMSVS SBDKD

Egg1st - 10 hours ago

Love me some of that Piper mayhem✧

trutherr57 - 6 hours ago

went and got my hopes up about a new Piper channel for nothing 😞😞 This is just a reupload from 49thClone

SsAHctiB - 5 hours ago

sometimes i stumble across videos like this and they really make me wonder how this dude hasn't been caught yet

Hall0000000 - 3 hour ago

Bruh this literally has someone else's watermark on it take this shit down it's not yours

The Dangerous Spicy -1 hour ago

ALSFJASDLKFJASDLKFJA THE WAY HE KICKED THAT DUDE IN THE BALLS????? WE HAVE TO STAN

PeeYeojas - 1 hour ago

Is this a new hero?? 👀👀

On the third night Midoriya wakes up at three in the morning in tears. It's his first dream about Eraserhead.

In it he is unable to run, instead forced to move like one would wading through knee high water. Aizawa is several yards ahead of him, his broken body sprawled across the broken concrete. Midoriya opens his mouth to scream the hero's name but all that comes out is the screeching cry of the monster. The pool of blood ringing the man's head grows larger with each passing second until its fanned out to the size of a small swimming pool.

I have to save him. I have to save him.

But all thoughts of such heroism are quickly swept away the moment he catches sight of another figure that begins emerging from the pool. Crawling out of it like one would from the pits of hell, comes the monster. It's drenched in Aizawa's blood like it'd swam in it. It's maw opens with a silent cry, blood streaming from it's mouth and down its face and arms and chest and—

A choked sob escapes the boy when he sees Aizawa beginning to slowly sink into the pool, disappearing beneath the rippling tide of red. The monster reaches its hand out towards the boy.

He wonders how many more times he'll have to suffer at the mercy of villainous hands such as these, wonders how many times will be enough to satiate his dreams of heroism.

How many times will he have to die?

How many more deaths will it take for people to call him *martyr?* To praise him for what he's accomplished?

The blood slick hand wraps itself around his face and the boy jerks awake gasping for air. Phantom fingers press into the skin of his jaw and his cheeks and his temples, crushing his skull. His side flares with fresh pain and he thinks for just a moment that he's just come to on the floor of the USJ all over again. He doesn't realize he's been sobbing aloud, doesn't realize he'd been screaming until his mother barges into his room, a look of panic carved into her brows. A harrowed sob breaks past his lips at the sight of her as she rushes over and drags him into a hug. The position he's pulled into sends a torrent of flames into his ribs and makes unbelievably sick and all he can bring himself to do is cry harder and cling to the front of her shirt like he's four again.

The Unseen Story Behind UA's Attack

By Akihito Jun

April 14, 2232

(Disclaimer: Musutafu Hero Reporting and its writers neither support nor condone any form of illegal activities including that of vigilantism.)

As many are probably already aware, on April 11, 2232 a UA training facility known as the Unforeseen Simulation Joint (USJ) was infiltrated by what police state were seventy-three villains via an alleged teleportation quirk. The attack occurred during a routine training exercise involving one of the school's first year hero courses.

Upon the villain's arrival communications were cut with the outside

world trapping twenty untrained students and two licensed heroes inside the building and leaving them to handle the hoard of villains. Though thankfully none of the students were harmed in the attack, both teachers were admitted to the hospital with substantial injuries.

As reports of what happened that day are continuously being updated and new information is coming out, it has come to light about the involvement of a third party, the vigilante Pied Piper. Witnesses put Piper fighting alongside students and heroes inside the USJ. In an interview with one of the UA students present during the attack (who will remain anonymous for privacy purposes) stated that the vigilante helped take down the villain credited it Rescue Hero, Thirteen's hospitalization. The interviewee in question claims that it was thanks to this that their classmates were able to escape harm free and help was able to arrive so quickly.

All Might arrived on scene soon after, battling the leaders of the group before more heroes and police appeared. While at least two villains managed to escape all others were captured and are currently awaiting trial.

I was fortunate enough to get a meeting with one of the detectives handling the case who informed me of some of the events details. "To be honest with you… Piper deserves most of the credit for the capture of these villains… That kid [Piper] quite literally cut the group's task force in half, before they even managed to make it into school grounds." This detective, who for undisclosed reasons I am not allowed to name, later went on to state that police had been in contact with Piper leading up to the attack and that he "was the first to locate the villains' original meeting place".

While little info has been released on what took place after the students were evacuated from the building. But, I did manage to intercept reports from onsite medical personnel that a person matching Pied Piper's description was carried out to an ambulance in an injured state before managing to escape.

With several days having passed since Pied Piper's escape there is still no news on the vigilante's whereabouts or his current health. Many fans believe he's simply recuperating from what injuries he sustained during the fighting while others are starting to think the worst. Rumors of his death have recently begun circulating online forums, but thus far no verifiable evidence pointing to this has been brought forward.

When confronting the detective I met with this information they had very little to say, refusing to answer any questions about how Piper managed to escape or how the villains were able to bypass UA's notorious security system.

(Update 4/15/23 notice: disclaimer added)

© 2232 Musutafu Hero Reporting, a division

of Musutafu Daily Network, LLC.

Tsukauchi Naomasa has never been one for violence, but at the moment he is mere seconds away from strangling the next person that speaks out of turn. There's been no recent news of Piper, no sightings, no known hospital visits, no unconscious bodies sprawled out in alleyways.

This is the type of silence that's sure to drive him mad.

And yet the silence isn't so silent at all.

UA calls a meeting a few days following the USJ incident. And as the lead detective on Piper's case he'd been asked by the UA's principal himself to attend. Tensions had been high since the beginning and had only gotten higher after thirty minutes of back and forth about things Naomasa didn't see a point in discussing.

"We have to consider the possibility that Piper was working in collaboration with the League," Vlad King says hotly, eyes daring anyone to challenge him.

"Piper fought on UA's side," Naomasa hisses. "Not only did he split the League's fighting force in half before they made it on campus. But, he also risked his life to protect both the students and teachers. We have very clear eyewitness testimony on this," the Detective explains for what has to be the third time. "You can't just ignore all of that. Imagine what would've happened if all those villains had made it into the USJ. People could've died."

"In all due respect, Tsukauchi-san," the hero cuts in, eyeing him. "I believe you're too close to this case."

Naomasa's jaw clenches painfully, headache blooming painfully at the base of his skull

“It’s because he’s so close to this case that his input is so valuable,” Nezu states calmly. “Out of all of us he’s the one who knows Piper the best.” The principal glances towards Naomasa. “It’s known among some of the staff that the child has some history with UA. I believe that you’re aware of this. Aizawa has told me that in a past encounter with Piper, the vigilante referenced UA as a sort of dream he was unable to achieve. If he was ever rejected for some reason it’s possible that he could have wanted revenge which is what I believe Kan is referencing with his theory. But, as it stands there’s no proof of this being the case.”

“Are we really suspecting a kid that was seriously injured by members of the League to have been working in collaboration with them?” Yamada asks, “Most of you saw the state he was in after carrying Shouta up all those stairs. But besides that, we’re ignoring something more important than whatever Piper’s intentions were.” There’s a heavy pause as he leans forward, fingers lacing themselves together beneath his chin. “How did these villains get the info about 1-A’s schedule? Even the students wouldn't’ve known about it until just before class.”

Naomasa sends a grateful glance at the hero as the conversation finally steers itself away from Piper. “Police have started reviewing the school's security footage in collaboration with a select few faculty members here in search of any suspicious activity. Though we haven't managed to find anything significant as of yet anything.”

Nezu accepts a cup of tea from Midnight, smiling gently at her. “It's highly possible that the press breach earlier this week could have served as a distraction for someone to access the lesson plans,” he explains. “It was a possibility that I considered when it first occurred, but when nothing turned up missing or tampered with I pushed the idea to the side. It was my mistake for not taking my suspicions to all of you sooner.”

Yamada shakes his head. “If you couldn't find anything unusual then there's no one here who would've fared any better.” The hero lets out a heavy sigh, yellow-green eyes scanning the faces in the room. “If nothing outwardly suspicious is found then I think it’s important we consider the possibility of a traitor.”

Chapter End Notes

DFKHJASDJF IT'S A DAY LATE AND A LITTLE SHORT BUT OH WELL ADSKFJHASDKJF I hope you all enjoyed it, there's only

going to be more big happenings coming up soon so I hope you're all prepared to face them DSKFJHDSJKFJASD until next time!

Comet

Chapter Notes

Fanart!!!
AveryArts13

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Appearance wise Midoriya's side has gotten worse. He refuses to spend much time looking at it, but from what glances he's had it's become a hideously dark midnight purple.

"Are you sure I can't get you to go to the doctor?" Inko mutters worriedly, gently placing a wet rag on his forehead.

"It's not that bad, just a bit of a cold," he tells her, grinning weakly. "I'll be better in no time."

She frowns, studying his face. He knows his dark circles look worse than ever and prays she doesn't feel swayed to drag him to a clinic just from looking at them. "If you're not feeling better by Monday we'll go. You wouldn't be like this if it was just a normal cold," Inko says sternly.

He makes a soft noise of confirmation but doesn't look at her, can't look at her. He pulls the wet cloth on his forehead down to cover his eyes. He doesn't want her to see the guilt in them.

By the end of the week Midoriya's fever breaks, leaving him without a viable explanation for the bedridden state he's in after four days. Inko's pleased by the development but continues worrying given his appearance.

He tells her he's just recovering a little more slowly than usual.

She has no reason not to believe him.

The weekend gives him a small reprieve from school, letting him recuperate for just a little longer without worrying about UA studying his absence too closely. It's not nearly enough time for his wounds to

have even begun healing, but on the dawn of the sixth day he forces himself to get ready for school.

“If you're still not feeling well I can take you to the doctor instead,” Inko calls through his bedroom door.

“I'm fine, mom!”

As much as he'd love to stay at home and continue to lay in bed, missing anymore school could look suspicious and land him in the same position going to a hospital could. Dressing himself proves to be extremely difficult. He manages to slip on his shirt and pants, but by the time they’re both on he’s left pale and sweaty. He decides against trying to don his jacket and tie, deeming them as far more trouble than they’re worth and leaves them slung over the back of his desk chair.

He swallows down two of the pain pills Reo had left him and slips out of his bedroom while Inko’s busy in the kitchen. He calls out a goodbye over his shoulder after he steps into his shoes and is out the door before she has time to see him off.

“Call me if you start feeling any worse and I'll pick you up!”

Izuku can’t muster up the strength for a response as he shuts the door, locking it behind him.

The walk to the train station alone is enough to leave him in more pain than he's felt in awhile. Izuku doesn’t think he’s ever felt the genuine temptation to go to the hospital until that point.

Reo looks as if his soul leaves his body the moment he catches sight of the younger teen walking unsteadily towards the platform. “Izuku,” he whispers as the boy boards the train. Midoriya leans against Reo's back, resting his head tiredly on top of the other’s backpack. “Are you sure you're okay?” Reo asks over his shoulder, concern obvious.

“Yeah,” Midoriya mumbles, “Just haven't been sleeping well, nightmares ‘n stuff.”

“You can always take an extra day and get some more sleep,” Reo suggests, craning his neck to get a look at the boy.

Izuku rocks his head gently back and forth. “It's fine. I don't want to miss anymore school when the semester’s just started,” he breathes.

Pain pills only help take the edge off so much. By the time they've made it to the school gates, Midoriya is already exhausted. He wasn't lying when he told Reo he hasn't been sleeping well. Little had changed following the first few nights after the attack, every bit of sleep he's gotten has been plagued by night terrors more vivid than others he's had in the past.

Izuku wants nothing more than to go back home the moment he sets foot in the building. The crowd of students that swarming the halls is suffocating in a way Midoriya hadn't expected. He slides closer towards the wall just to get his back against something solid. Reo stays by his side, but he can't prevent the surrounding students from reminding him of a few of his more recent nightmares.

"Follow me," Reo murmurs, gently taking his hand and pulling him down emptier corridors. It takes longer to make it to his class, but Midoriya can't bring himself to find issue with the detour as the tension in his shoulders eases.

"Thank you," Izuku murmurs as they pause just outside his class.

"Are you sure you're okay to be here right now?" Reo asks him softly, lowering his voice when a group of students pass by. "It's all right to not be okay. You know that, right? The school has a therapist that you can talk to or we can find somewhere else that–"

Izuku shakes his head gently, glancing back at the door to his classroom. "You and I both know it's pointless for me to go to someone like that," he murmurs, dropping his voice lower. "I wouldn't be able to tell them about what I do, about the things that would actually be affecting me." A small smile slides across Midoriya's face. It feels like a mask, something he's doing only for show. "Besides. I'm fine."

Reo doesn't need a quirk to tell it's a *lie.* But, Izuku never expected him to believe it in the first place.

"Stop saying you're fine."

"If I say it enough it'll have to come true eventually," Midoriya chuckles, pain sparking up along his ribs. "Like wishing on dandelions, or shooting stars," Izuku says, holding back a pained expression. He glances at the clock on the wall behind them. "You better hurry if you don't wanna be late for class. I'll see you at lunch,

yeah?”

There's deep furrows carved between Reo’s brows. Midoriya’s only regret is that there's nothing he can do to soothe it.

“Yeah.”

Izuku deflates the moment the teen disappears around the corner, letting out a shuddered breath. He sucks in sharply, trying his best to control the pain that's been surging through him that’d only gotten worse since arriving on campus.

He doesn't want to be here.

Midoriya hadn't been expecting for 1-C to surround him with constant reminders of what happened at the USJ, but as it is too many of his classmates have taken on the faces of 1-A students. And though Mic’s appearance contrasts too much from that of Aizawa’s for his mind to project 1-A’s homeroom teacher onto 1-C’s, his brain still takes the liberty to remind him of the man through the soft frown on Yamada’s lips. Midoriya is able to pick out the camouflaged expression the moment he sets foot in class.

Mic lightly scolds him for the lack of jacket and tie and Izuku can only manage some half hearted excuse about spilling his breakfast on them as thoughts of Eraserhead's condition bubble up. Reo had told him the news had him listed as alive and recovering, but Midoriya has a hard time erasing the images of the man’s broken body.

He does his best not to look at anyone as he makes his way to his seat, keeping his eyes on the bright red of his shoes. He slips into his seat silently, closing his eyes for a moment of respite. They flutter back open after a moment and he stares past a few of his classmates to look out the window. The sky is bright and blue, only a few clouds decorating the horizon.

There's a tap on his shoulder from behind and Midoriya cranes his neck to look back at the violet-haired teen behind him, but the moment he catches sight of the boy his face is replaced with Aizawa’s. The breath catches in his chest as purple bleeds black.

Blood drips from the man’s nose.

“You said you wanted to save people, right?” Aizawa’s ghost whispers to

him.

“Midoriya?”

Izuku has to pry himself away from the images in his head, squeezing his eyes shut in an attempt to break the link between Shinsou and Eraserhead.

The teen has a look on his face that makes him think Shinsou hadn't fully decided if talking to him was the right decision before he’d started speaking. “You okay?” he asks, quickly looking away after making brief eye contact. “Your friend told me you were pretty sick.”

I'm not okay, Izuku thinks, and the honesty of the thought surprises him.

“I’m fine,” he chokes out instead, “Just coming off a bit of a fever.”

The boy looks sceptical at his response but drops the subject when Yamada calls for the start of homeroom.

Midoriya can’t say that he pays attention to most of the day's lessons. He sits out during their P.E. class, but can’t prevent himself from staring at their substitute teacher. His classmates play a few rounds of Capture the Flag and what time Izuku should have spent resting he spends keeping himself from mentally spiraling instead.

Lunch passes in too much of a haze for him to remember much, only that Reo gets him something from the lunchline. He barely remembers having eaten whatever it was.

Today’s worn on him more than he thought it would.

English ends up being the only exception to his lack of attention, Yamada’s voice too hard for even his nightmarish thoughts to drown out. And while the man’s voice keeps his mind from more unsavory thoughts, it does nothing to curb the exhaustion he’s been fighting since he woke up this morning. He uses the arm on his good side as a pillow and leaves his other to rest in his lap as he lets the man’s voice lull him into some well needed sleep.

Hizashi watches the boy fall asleep from the corner of his eye as he continues teaching. Something was obviously wrong with the kid, but the man simply boils it down to the reason he’s been absent.

He lets him sleep, if only this once.

In Midoriya's newest dreamscape Aizawa and Eri stand before him. They're covered in blood and dirt and bandages. *"Why didn't you save me?"* Aizawa asks him coldly, his twisted and mangled hand tightening around Eri's. *"Why didn't you save us?"*

Their eyes are matching shades of crimson.

The hero reaches out towards him, grabbing him tightly by the shoulder. *"Deku."*

The action throws him violently into wakefulness as he jerks awake in his seat, phantom fingers still gripping him. But, the harsh hand from his dream turns out to be a gentle one on his shoulder.

"Midoriya?" Yamada asks from beside him, "You alright little listener?"

Izuku carefully pulls himself into a proper sitting position. His eyes are dilated in fear and pain and cheeks flush from embarrassment. "S-Sorry for falling asleep," he murmurs.

"Midoriya, you're crying," the teacher tells him gently.

He blinks tiredly at the man, bringing a hand up to swipe at his cheek.

"Why don't you talk with me after class?"

Izuku can't bring himself to form an actual response and simply nods, quickly wiping away the evidence of his nightmares before they have a chance to dry there.

He refuses to make eye contact with any of his classmates, ignoring Shinsou's worried stare on his back.

'After class' ends up being five minutes later, a majority of the class had already been in the middle of packing up when he'd been woken up. Shinsou sends him a concerned look before leaving, but doesn't say anything, only sending him a small nod before disappearing out the door with everyone else. Izuku hoists his backpack up onto his left shoulder, doing his best to keep it away from his injured ribs.

Midoriya approaches the teacher nervously. He knows how he looks,

knows his hair is laden with grease and dirt and probably a smattering of blood considering he hasn't been able to bathe properly since the USJ. He's only wearing half of his uniform and he's sure his dark circles look almost bruise like against his blanched skin.

He's not even sure where to start about the grim look that's made its home in his eyes.

He catches sight of the man's canary yellow hair and realizes that is now familiar for a reason other than his role as 1-C's teacher. *Yamada Sensei was there,* he reminds himself as he stops in front of the podium. *He took Aizawa from my arms. He knows.*

The boy finds a sort of solace in the thought.

"Is there anything you want to talk about?" Mic's voice is surprisingly quiet for his usually rowdy personality. "Your other teachers agreed that you looked kind of out of it today. You even fell asleep in class." The man raises his hand and rests the back of it against the boy's forehead. Izuku tries and fails not to flinch at the contact, but if Mic notices he doesn't say anything. "If you're still sick then you should be at home resting, there's no need for you to push yourself." The man gives him a small smile as he lowers his hand. "The fact that you're even here in this state tells me you're a studious kid. And with your test scores from the entrance exam there shouldn't be any need for you to worry about falling behind."

Izuku weakly tugs his lips up in a smile, one that he's worried is tinged with the pain that's currently flaring through his ribs. "Sorry Sensei, I just haven't been sleeping well is all. Nothing to be too concerned about."

"Are they nightmares?"

Izuku tenses, but keeps his smile. "Just a few."

Mic nods solemnly, understanding glittering in his eyes. "The school does have a counselor, Midoriya. And any of the teachers here are more than willing to talk with you if you need it, myself included."

Midoriya feels his heart clench uncomfortably in his chest. *You're not at all like the teachers at Aldera.* "Thank you…" he says, looking away. "If I need to I'll know where to go."

Mic only smiles softly, *sadly,* down at him.

Reo's waiting in the hall when he comes out. He pushes himself away from the wall and holds his hand out for Midoriya's bag. Izuku hesitates for only a moment before gladly handing it off.

"You look worse than you did at lunch," Reo says as they set off towards the school's gates.

"There's a lot of reminders here," Midoriya whispers instead, forcing himself not to do a double take when he spies a girl with short brown hair from the corner of his eye. "Ghosts of memories."

Reo glances at him worriedly. "I'm always here to talk, Izuku."

The boy sighs softly, "I know."

Midoriya's just boarded the train home when he remembers what Chee Sensei had asked of him last week. He curses, drawing the eyes of several people sliding past him as Reo finds them a free spot to sit. The urge to tug at his hair is strong, but he knows his ribs would suffer for it if he tried.

"What is it?" Tsukauchi asks.

"I'm supposed to help Chee Sensei train some new kids at the dojo today," Midoriya gunts, gingerly sitting down.

Reo studies him for a moment. "Can't you just tell her you're still sick?" the teen asks, "With the way you talk about her I doubt she'd be angry."

I'll just be teaching them the basics, Izuku thinks. *It's not like I'll be sparring.* He huffs defeatedly, "You're right. But, I won't be doing any actual fighting so I should be fine. I'll just be helping her out for a bit."

Reo reluctantly passes his backpack back to him. "Don't be afraid to tell her you're not feeling well. You don't know what being around people sparring could trigger so please be careful, Izuku."

"Let's pray on some shooting stars, yeah? Hope that everything will be okay." Midoriya says, smiling weakly as the scenery outside begins to blur.

Grinning teeth flash through the darkness. *“Weren’t you the one who once said dreaming got you nowhere?”*

After parting ways with Reo, Midoriya starts the painful journey to the dojo for the first time in over almost a week. The last thing Midoriya wants to do is owe Giran anymore favors, but if today was any hint into what awaited him he didn’t see much of a choice in the matter. He knows Giran is in contact with at least one doctor and if he knows about Piper’s injuries, which Midoriya expects from him, he should already have a doctor for him in mind. Izuku doesn’t think he can handle many more days like this one.

I’ll offer as much money as I can but… there’s no guarantee it’ll be enough. He’ll know I’m in a tight spot.

By the time he gets to the dojo he feels like death and doubts he’ll even hesitate to call Giran the moment he gets home. He debates just turning around and leaving now, desperate for his body to feel some bit of normalcy. But, he can already see the new students lined up through the building’s front windows and Hirano waves at him eagerly from inside.

He hadn’t brought any extra clothes with him today but he knows there’s a stash of forgotten items in the back and makes a beeline to rummage through it. He manages to find a long sleeve shirt that will cover the bruises littering his arms and the bandage on his neck. Granted he’s forced to slip into a pair of basketball shorts and therefor can’t cover all the wounds he’d gotten. He can only pray that any exposed injuries can be passed off as ones sustained from sparring.

He’s sweaty and pale and in an immense amount of pain by the time he manages to strip out of his uniform and pull on the other clothes. His side is on fire and he has to grab onto the sink’s edge just to calm the nausea that threatens to bring up his meager lunch.

The mirror offers him the reflection of a cadaver.

Anyone who’s been in the dojo long enough is used to seeing Midoriya in various states of hurt or exhaustion after nearly a year of vigilantism, but he’s certain that his appearance now far surpasses anything they’ve seen of him before. He gets a few concerned looks when he comes out of the bathroom and the new students lined up in front of Chee Sensei cast him wary glances. The woman herself sends him troubled looks as she speaks.

When Ji-woo is done giving them her opening speech she waves him over. For once she doesn't ask after his substandard appearance, simply sending him a disapproving look before introducing him to the kids.

"This is Midoriya Izuku. He'll be running you through some of the basics for today. Follow his instructions like you would mine."

"Yes, Sensei!"

There's a variety of ages, the oldest of whom looks to be around Midoriya's age and the youngest who seems no less than ten. There's six of them, an even number, which means he won't have to partner with anyone for group activities. It's such a small thing, but in the state he's in it's an unspoken miracle.

He runs them through a simple set of drills, showing them muay thai march and how to correctly throw a punch. Which, if he's being honest, had sent black curling at the edges of his vision when one of his ribs shifted during the demonstration. Midoriya walks slowly around the group, correcting stances and forms as he goes and by the end of it most of the new students look tired, though none can match the pallor Izuku's taken.

Abe comes bounding up to him at the end of the session. He's sweaty, having just finished a sparring match of his own, but there's a wicked glint in his eye.

Abe is a boy with a mutation type quirk that'd come to the dojo a few years after Midoriya. He gives off a vibe similar to the one Tanaka had when Ji-Woo still taught him. Abe wasn't nearly as good at fighting as the other teen, but the similarity of their attitudes have always made Izuku wary of making friends with him.

His hair's an ashy blue, and tied back in the smallest ponytail Midoriya's ever seen. Wolf-like ears twitch expectantly at the top of his head. "Midoriya, you up for a round? How about we show the newbies how it's done?" There's a shit eating grin crawling across Abe's face, canines glinting as a murmur of excitement goes through the group of kids in front of him.

Izuku sighs, dull green eyes locking with Abe's blue ones. "I'm not feeling up to it today. Ask Hirano or Gamon if you're that pent up."

"Don't tell me Sensei's star pupil is scared?" The shit eating grin only grows, ears pricking forwards.

Izuku closes his eyes, sighing. It's obvious that Abe is trying to take advantage of the state Midoriya's in, he'd felt eyes boring into him several times throughout the last hour and looking back it seems clear that it'd been Abe's doing. Under normal circumstances the younger teen wouldn't stand a chance against the more experienced Midoriya, but as it is Izuku can feel his legs tremble minutely beneath him. Not to mention the strong feeling he has that his fever's returned in full force after his rib had shifted earlier. Izuku pinches at the bridge of his nose, face twisting with pain in an expression that Abe mistakes for irritation.

His grin rises, his smile wolf-like in every sense of the word. "Get ready!"

Midoriya's eyes snap open immediately, taking in Abe's form as he winds his leg up to throw a kick. Izuku wants to do nothing more than humiliate the boy in front of the very kids that he'd sought to impress.

He knows what to do, how to do it, knows how to take down the smug bastard in one fell swoop. But any pain medicine in his system had worn off long before lunch and his mind tells him before his body does that his limbs aren't going anywhere fast enough.

Abe's foot collides with the ribs opposite his injured ones. There's a white hot flash of pain as the impact connects, sending shockwaves through his broken ribs and forcing him to his knees.

After that, there's nothing.

He's not out that long, but when Midoriya comes to Chee Sensei is hovering over his injured side, the hem of his shirt clenched tightly in her hand. The woman catches his half conscious gaze and returns it with a look somehow darker than the black of her eyes.

"What the hell did you do?"

He notes that her freckles are brighter than he's ever seen them before.

He can't find the strength to respond to the question, doesn't know what he'd say even if he could. He lets his eyes fall shut instead as his exhaustion catches up with him.

He wakes up again briefly, this time in a car that Chee Sensei's driving. She doesn't spare him a glance before the engine's rumbling puts him back to sleep.

The third time he wakes up it's in a hospital.

Chapter End Notes

There goes another week! It's on time as well too! □ It's not one of my favorite chapters that I've written, but the cliffhanger was fun to write □ □ □ My beta and I have been scheming together recently so get ready for the next few upcoming chapters. It's gonna be a wild ride so I hope you're prepared for next week!
Also I just want to thank everyone for all the support you've been giving me, I know I don't respond to all of the comments you all leave, but know that I still read all of them and appreciate them and love reading them so much! 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾
See you all next time!

Umbra

Chapter Notes

TW :// Heavy Themes and Discussions of Suicide

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart:

Spaixel (they had more art but it's technically spoilers for chapter 40 so I'll post them next week)

CARNAGE x

Midoriya comes to in a room with several other patients, his bed separated from their quiet talking by thin walls of hanging curtains. Ji-woo sits in a chair to his left, patiently scrolling through her phone, but her freckles are flared a bright, neon blue that clues him in to her agitation.

She glances up when he pulls himself into a seated position. The pain in his ribs is no more than a deep ache and he wonders how much medicine they'd had to pump into him for that.

"Your mother's on her way."

He feels calmer than he should at the words and blames it on whatever drugs they'd given him. Under normal circumstances he's sure there would have been some sort of panic attack involved. Instead there is only a looming sense of dread.

He still doesn't have a story.

"The burn."

"What?"

"The burn," she repeats, pressing a hand into the back of her neck. "You used to always come in with bruises and burns," Ji-woo says, "You *still* come in with injuries you didn't leave with. I always mentioned it when I noticed, but…" she pauses, testing the next words in her head before continuing. "I gave you space. I was going to wait until you were comfortable enough to talk to me yourself. Then this

happens. Don’t lie to me Midoriya. Who did this to you?”

He freezes up, he doesn’t want to lie to her, even if he’s been lying to her from the start. He doesn’t want to lie. But, what else is there for a liar to do?

“The burn was an accident.”

“And your broken ribs?”

“A mistake,” he mumbles, looking away.

Ji-Woo watches him silently, waiting for him to continue. But, he still doesn’t know what to say, doesn’t know what lies to use. The truth is a death sentence and lies could catch the attention of police. He needs something that won’t require their interference, something that doesn’t involve other people. He studies his hands, studies the iv taped to the back of it.

“I tried to kill myself.”

Midoriya doesn't know what kind of reaction he expects from the woman, whether it be outrage or silence he's not sure. The boy doesn't even know how he would react in her stead. He doesn't know what else to say, what else to do. Does he need to say more? Does she want him to say more?

He can't even bring himself to check the glow of her freckles.

"I wasn't thinking straight,” Izuku murmurs, “I climbed a building that wasn’t high enough and landed on something, a wall or fence or…” his hands shake. Even if his attempted suicide is a lie, it feels real. He remembers his first encounter with Reo, remembers the feeling of falling, of landing.

There have been so many moments throughout his short vigilante career that Midoriya remembers being marked for death, ones that he’d escaped alive by luck alone.

“Midoriya—”

He cuts the woman off.

He has sins he wishes to confess.

"It… It wouldn't shut up." Midoriya Izuku has told many lies, his next words are not one of them. The voice in his head was a secret just a

few years younger than his dreams of becoming a hero. “It’s always laughing,” the boy chokes out, on the verge of tears. The monitor next to him beeps wildly, tracking his heart as his hand flies to his chest, bunching up the fabric of his hospital gown beneath his clenched fist. “It’s al–always saying that I,” he gasps, chest shuddering, side lighting up again with fire, “That I!”

There’s been so many people that Izuku’s failed, Eri and Thirteen and Aizawa and—

“Midoriya,” Ji-Woo says quietly. She takes his other hand in hers, squeezing it gently. “It’s alright. You don’t have to relive it.”

He covers his mouth with a hand, choking back sobs as he curls in on himself. Ji-Woo’s hands are warm around his.

Midoriya Izuku thinks himself weak, thinks himself a loner, a nobody, a *deku* .

No one will question his lie.

Even Midoriya, one of the only two people who knows the truth behind his injuries, has started to fall for it. It doesn’t seem such a stretch for him to say that he caved beneath the pressure in his head, that his sun collapsed beneath the weight of his caustic thoughts.

He eventually tires himself out, falling asleep again and disappearing into a peaceful oblivion where even dreams dare not disturb him.

Inko arrives while he's still out, Ji-Woo pulling her to the side and reassuring her he'd be fine. She’s the one to explain to the woman what Izuku had told her.

In any other circumstance Midoriya is sure he would’ve woken up to his mother's hysterical sobbing. But as it is, he's the only one that doesn't.

He wakes up several hours later to Inko’s hand replacing Ji-woo’s. She’s fallen asleep in the chair he’d last seen his instructor in. Her head hangs at an odd angle, wrapped tightly in her pink cardigan with Ji-Woo’s jacket draped over her shoulders.

He watches the rise and fall of her shoulders with a deep, aching sadness that floods the entirety of his chest.

He never wanted to hurt her, not like this.

One of the curtains around his bed slides open, revealing a tall Chinese woman dressed in a doctor's coat. Her ashe blue hair is pulled back in a high ponytail, two long horns sprouting at the edge of her hairline. "You're awake," she says, surprised. "I thought you'd sleep longer, but at least this way I'll be able to talk to you." She picks up the chart at the end of the bed, reading over it. "How's your pain level?"

"Better," he croaks. The doctor hands him a cup of water from one of the bedside stands. He mutters a quick thank you before taking a few small sips. "I feel like I can actually breathe now which is nice," he laughs softly, eyes crinkling shut. His smile is small and tainted with the weight of his lies, but it's a genuine one.

"Good. If you feel like it's getting worse at any time, call for one of the nurses and they'll get you sorted out. I'm Dr. Sui by the way, your attending physician." She glances briefly at his mother before turning back to him. "The woman who brought you in gave me a run down of your situation. If it's difficult for you to talk about right now or if you want to wait till your mother wakes up before answering anything then we can save it for later."

Izuku straightens, sobering himself through the light hazy of his pain meds. "Now is fine."

She bobs her head in confirmation before pressing ahead. "I'd like to know if there are any other injuries you may have sustained in your fall. We want to make sure there's nothing we might've overlooked."

"Right," Izuku murmurs softly, glancing at one of the curtains when he sees it flutter. "I think I hit my head? I don't know if it was very hard, but it was bleeding a bit when I woke up."

She glances up at him, pen hovering over the clipboard. "You were knocked unconscious?" She asks.

Midoriya nods his head carefully, hands fidgeting in his lap, he flinches when doing so tugs at his IV. "Yes."

"Is there anything else you can think of?"

He shakes his head.

“Alright, there’s a few more questions I want to ask if that’s okay? This time about your recent psychological state, but those can wait if you’re not ready.”

After some hesitation Midoriya agrees. “That’s fine,” he says, shrinking in on himself.

“You're allowed to ask me to stop at any time,” she explains carefully, “or simply not answer something if you find you're feeling uncomfortable, okay?”

He makes a quiet noise in confirmation, mentally preparing himself for what's to come. He'd lied to Ji-Woo about the origin of his injuries, but he hadn't lied to her about where he was mentally. There were many times the voice in his head had pushed him too close to his breaking point growing up and while it’d been easier to handle in the last year with his push towards vigilantism, it didn’t mean that it’d gone away.

Midoriya had deeper wounds for it to prod at now.

Izuku knows his mind isn’t a very user friendly place. When people speak of drowning out the demons in their head he doubts that very many people have demons like his own. He knows there’s something wrong with him, knows his thoughts aren’t normal ones. In the back of his mind the voice rears its head. *“Doctors too will file your fangs and cut your claws and clip your wings, perhaps more viciously so than their law enforcement counterparts,”* his demon laughs viciously. *“They’ll lock you in a cell of a different kind.”*

“This first question might be a little hard to answer, so remember you don't have to respond if you don't want to.” When Midoriya shows no signs of changing his mind, the doctor continues. “Have you attempted suicide before this?”

He tenses, caught off guard by the question even after the woman's warning. “No,” he croaks out weakly.

“Do you know if there's anything specific that might've spurred you into this recent episode?”

“No,” Izuku repeats, falling further into himself, sun flickering.

“No bullying?” his doctor asks, eyeing him with a raised brow. “Your

instructor warned me there was a possibility of it."

His hand reaches for the back of his neck. There's a new set of bandages there. "It was an accident," he murmurs, pausing for only a moment to gather thoughts, "They told me they have trouble controlling their quirk."

While Izuku's story was a majority lies, the repercussions of it were very real. Implicating anyone by name or quirk or even vague association could be dangerous. An investigation could punch too many questionable holes through his lies and questionable holes in a cover story like his has every chance of drawing Detective Tsukauchi's unwavering eyes.

"Can I ask who?" Dr. Sui asks, breaking him from his thoughts.

"What?"

She rephrases the question, "Who left you with the burn on your neck?"

Midoriya's mouth snaps closed, keeping his silence. It's best to leave that part of the story open ended.

The doctor sighs, moving on. "Are suicidal thoughts something you experience frequently?"

"Not willingly," Izuku mutters truthfully. "Usually they're easy to ignore, more intrusive thoughts than anything." His fists clench in his lap. Usually such thoughts come in the form of Bakugou's taunting laugh. *"Wish for a quirk in your next life and–"* His words must have been recycled a million times over by now. *"–take a swan dive off the roof!"* He's certain they're destined to be continuously recycled in his head till the end of time

"I don't want to die," Izuku sighs. "I just wanna sleep for a long time," he murmurs, more to himself than to the doctor. He's just so tired.

This seems to be what it takes to ease the tension in the doctor's shoulders. She marks something down on his chart, black eyes a little softer than they'd been before. "If it's worth anything," she says, looking up. "I'm glad to see that you're still with us."

Midoriya feels his heart clench in his chest. "I'm glad too," he croaks.

"I have more to talk with you about, but it'd be best to discuss it with

your mother.” Dr. Sui casts another glance at the sleeping woman. “It's important.” Her voice tolds a more serious tone now and it sets a bitter kind of fear bubbling up in the teenager.

Izuku nods, leaning towards her chair and gently shaking her shoulder. “Mom?” he murmurs quietly. “The doctor’s here.”

She comes around slowly, then all at once. She tears up immediately upon seeing the boy up and moving and Midoriya has to hold his breath to keep from doing the same. “Izuku,” she whispers hoarsely. She cups one of his cheeks with a cool hand, before it slips down to clasp his hand tightly. She brings his hand up to her lips, kissing it with shaking fingers. She holds them up to her forehead, resting her head on top of them. “My baby,” she weeps.

“Hi, mom,” he chokes quietly, “Sorry for worrying you.”

Dr. Sui gives them a few minutes of privacy to recompose themselves before she comes back with a tablet that she holds up for them, showing off a set of CT scans he doesn't remember taking.

“I’ll be frank with you both,” she starts, eyes turning towards Midoriya to address him directly. “At the moment you have a total of five fractured ribs, one is a partial fracture and four are completely so. Of the four that are broken through, two are displaced,” she explains, drawing a red ring around two areas that show the gory truth of what he's been living with the last few days. The image shows just how severely the two ribs overlap on themselves like gory tectonic plates. “Besides this you also have a costochondral separation on this rib,” Dr. Sui says, pointing to one of the displaced ones. “Which means your rib and the cartilage that connects it to your sternum are no longer attached to one another leaving a rather large piece of your 6th rib free floating in your chest. Usually when someone breaks their rib there’s no need for surgery, but with the amount that you’ve broken along with the displacement of your 7th rib and the detached segment of your 6th, surgery will be required in order to correct it.”

Izuku feels his chest tighten, he hadn't thought it'd be that bad. Beside him his mother lets out a quiet whimper.

“Because of your ribs’ displacement the current diameter of your ribcage is a few inches smaller than it usually is. If left alone it's likely to heal as it is and would cause permanent difficulty breathing, constant bouts of fatigue and dizziness, as well as leave you at a perpetually higher risk for contracting pneumonia. This would make

any future physical activities much harder for you, even simple tasks like climbing stairs or walking could become chores." The woman sets the tablet down, directing her full attention to him. "Had your 6th rib shifted any further you'd be dead by now," she tells him.

His mother lets out a choked sob from beside him but can't bring himself to face her. He bows his head, face flushed with shame and fear.

"–'m sorry," Inko cries, "I'm so sorry!"

His mother is always repeating those words, always because she thinks she's failed him in some way.

He wonders how many more times he'll make her say them.

Izuku is the only one that should be apologizing. He caused this, caused her heartache, her tears. But, there's no changing anything from here on. He's committed to this story for the sake of continuing to save others.

That doesn't prevent tears from welling up at the sound of his mother's sobbing.

In order to save his dream he must first crush the hearts of those closest to him. When their dying suns have collapsed into black holes he will be the gravity that birthed their singularities. He is the cause, the sole reason for their pain.

Dr. Sui allows them to recover themselves again, though his mother is still sniveling when the woman presses forward with the conversation. "The good news is that the surgery is a relatively easy one, I've performed it many times in the past on patients in worse conditions than Midoriya's. You'll be living with some titanium plates bolted inside your chest for the rest of your life, but there shouldn't be any long term problems unless you're trying to get through airport security," the doctor jokes, trying to ease the watery tension of the room. "Money also shouldn't be a concern with you attending UA. They have very good medical insurance built into their tuition costs and while it's usually geared towards hero course students it should foot a majority of your bill. We'll be able to refer you out to Recovery Girl post-surgery which will help shorten your recovery time as well as do away with the need for most if not all physical therapy you might've needed otherwise."

The doctor explains a few more things in detail to them before

handing over more paperwork for Inko to sign and setting up a time for them to perform the surgery tomorrow. “It’ll leave a few rather noticeable scars, even with the use of Recovery Girl’s quirk.”

He nods grimly. This wouldn't be the first time he’d received a nasty scar, just another reminder of his failures. He tenses. *Will they question my other scars?* He sighs as the two women step out for a moment to fill out more paperwork at the front desk and to perhaps discuss the answers to the questions the doctor had asked him earlier. He leans back in the bed, ribs twinging with pain. *Worst comes to worst I can tell them they’re old wounds, scars from times that have long passed.* It wouldn’t technically be a lie after all. He had the mark of phantom burns to prove it.

Reo stares at the news article in front of him in total disbelief. He only needs to read it once before it’s been permanently ingrained in his head. He doesn’t need to read it through the second time, nor the third to be able to be able to recite it perfectly line by line.

The Aftermath of the USJ Incident

By Akihito Jun

April 16, 2232

(Disclaimer: Musutafu Hero Reporting and its writers neither support nor condone any form of illegal activities including that of vigilantism.)

It has been several days since the vigilante known as Pied Piper was revealed to be involved in the UA attack that took place on April 11th. While no new information on the vigilante’s current condition has been released, the true severity of the injuries he received Wednesday have come to light in a new interview with one of the witnesses.

Todoroki Shouto, son of number two hero Endeavor and student of class 1-A was there to see the events at the USJ unfold. Surprisingly it was Todoroki who approached me first, set on clearing any misunderstandings people had set against Piper after the incident.

“He [Pied Piper] showed up with the villains, but I only ever saw him fighting against them. The first thing he did coming through was take

out the person with the warping quirk," Todoroki-kun told me, starting his story. He then went on to describe how the both 1-A's students and Piper had fought side by side. "He [Piper] and I tried to fight against the villain All Might had to take down. He was already running directly at it when he yelled for me to freeze it in place."

"And did you?" I asked him, wanting a bit of clarification from the teen.

"Yes. It wasn't enough though, that's how he [Pied Piper] got injured. My quirk wasn't strong enough," the hero hopeful recounts darkly. It was a terrifying sentiment coming from a powerhouse such as Endeavor's son, one that showed me just how strong of an enemy 1-A had been left to face. "He took a direct hit from that monster," Todoroki stated, looking grim.

In an earlier article I quickly addressed the fact that Piper had been injured during the fight, but the interviews referenced in it greatly under exaggerated Piper's condition. When asked, Todoroki-kun cited that the force of the punch was far "more than enough to break bones" and claimed that the attack had even knocked the vigilante unconscious for a time. "I thought he was dead… I thought I'd watched him die," Todoroki recounted in one of his many bone chilling statements.

The public is in an uproar as the whereabouts of Pied Piper remain unknown. How the vigilante managed to escape despite such injuries is still unclear. Some claim the work of a healing quirk while others call it a failure on the side of heroes and police. Search efforts for the Piper have slowed recently in favor of tracking down the main villains responsible for the attack. But, as the public's approval rating begins dropping dangerously it is expected for the Chief of the Police to make an official statement soon on the state of the vigilante's investigation.

On UA's side of things Principal Nezu has yet to comment on the vigilante's involvement in the USJ attack. But, did hold a short press conference discussing the school's new security measures as well as its plans to continue holding its annual sports festival.

Todoroki-kun's full interview transcript can be read here.

© 2232 Musutafu Hero Reporting, a division

of Musutafu Daily Network, LLC.

Reo reaches blindly for his phone, hands shaking as he dials Izuku's number.

There's no answer.

Fear bubbles up dangerously in his chest, quirk pulling bits and pieces of information on just what can happen to someone who's ribs have been broken. He pictures Midoriya suffocating beneath a collapsed lung, pictures him *dead.* He dials again. And again. And again.

He's just sleeping. He's only sleeping, is what he tells himself to calm down.

On the fifth call someone answers.

It's not Izuku.

"Hello? Tsukauchi-kun?" The voice on the other end of the phone surprises him. "It's Inko, Izuku's mom. He's resting right now. He um… He's at the hospital right now," she says, voice breaking over the phone.

Reo feels his whole body freeze, heart slowing dangerously in his chest. "The hospital?" the boy asks, voice dropping to a whisper.

"He'll be fine but… You're his only friend Tsukauchi-kun, so did you ever notice if… if he…" there's a long drag of silence broken only by the woman's periodical sniveling. Reo holds his breath, waiting for her next words. "No, nevermind. I'm sorry for worrying you. Izuku's going to be fine, he's supposed to have surgery sometime tomorrow. You should be able to come see him after school Wednesday if he's feeling up to it though I doubt he'd turn away a chance to see you," she laughs wetly.

"Surgery?" he asks, voice cracking. "What… What happened?" he asks quietly, sinking back into his seat. He's scared of the answer.

"I actually just ran into your mother earlier. I didn't realize she worked here," she laughs weakly. "You can ask her, I just… I don't think I can explain it anymore today," she whispers.

"Right," he breaths, "Right. I'll be there Wednesday then."

"Thank you." The sincerity of these words stab at him.

The call ends and Reo's concern quickly turns to cold anger. Midoriya

had lied to him, *again.* But more than being angry with Izuku he's angry with himself for not noticing the lie, for falling for it despite the obvious state he was in.

Surgery… Surgery… The word works its way through his head on repeat. *He needed surgery and no one even realized. Not me, not his mother, not anyone at school.* He curses, running a hand through his hair, tugging at it harshly.

"Did they find you out?" he asks his empty room. "Was it worth it? Was saving people worth it, Izuku?"

"Of course," Midoriya's voice laughs softly in his head. *"It's always been worth it."*

The teen curses again, louder this time, slamming his fist into his desk. There's a resounding silence that follows, ears ringing with static. "Dumbass," he murmurs.

Tsukachi Reo knows a lot. But, recently he never seems to know enough.

Chapter End Notes

> I'll keep this short since I'm honestly really excited to post this chapter akdjsfhasdkfj I hope you all enjoyed it, it was a lot of fun to write even if all the medical stuff had me going through 2 hours worth of internet research to find out the difference been a broken, fractured, and cracked rib only to find out at the end of it all that they're ALL THE SAME THING????? JADSFKAHSJFDKLADSF anyway yeah (thank you Piper server for helping me with that uwu) I've left you with yet another cliffhanger, but the next chapter is only a week away! I hope you're all prepared! Until next time!

Standard Candle

Chapter Notes

TW :// discussion and themes of suicide

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart!!!!!

Raibun x x x x x x

friendlynaborhooddisapointment

The sound of the front door opening sets Reo back into motion. He pushes himself up from his desk, walking towards the front door where he finds his mother tiredly slipping off her shoes. “Mom?”

It's been several hours since his short talk with Inko and he feels like every second that passes brings him closer to imploding. *Surgery… Surgery…* Over and over again the implication of the word runs through his head. *He had to have surgery.*

Misaki looks up at him, lips pulled taunt. He doesn’t think he’s ever seen her look *old* until now. “How was school?” she asks, setting her shoes aside and walking towards the kitchen. She’s halfway through filling up a glass of water before he finds he’s able to speak again.

“What happened to Izuku?”

The line of her shoulders tenses.

“Let's sit down,” she says instead, not quite looking at him as she takes a sip of her drink.

They take a seat in the living room, her in the arm chair, him on the edge of the couch. She stares at the glass in her hands for a long time, but Reo doesn't force her to say anything.

There’s so many repercussions to Izuku being in the hospital, so many possible consequences. It was obvious he hadn’t wanted to go, so the question of how he’d ended up in the hospital in the first place has been haunting him for the last few hours.

What if they found out. What if they know he's Piper. Th—

“Midoriya tried to kill himself,” Misaki says very quietly.

And really it’s that simple, isn’t it?

Reo’s mouth parts to respond with something, anything, but there’s nothing that comes out. He tries again, still there is nothing.

Reo knows thinks what the woman says isn't true. But, if it's a lie, it's a good one, good enough where even Reo can't be sure of the truth. He'd last seen Midoriya stumbling off the train at his stop. He'd been on the way to the dojo, *but what if he'd?* Tsukauchi viciously shakes the thought off.

“I'm so sorry, Reo.”

He wouldn't.

But there’s always the question of ‘what if’.

“You haven't eaten anything right?” Dr. Sui asks, flipping briefly through Izuku’s chart.

“I'm starving,” is what Midoriya responds with instead.

She huffs a laugh, a small smile riding up her lips to match his. “We'll be putting you under anesthesia soon. You'll be out for several hours, depending on how severe some of your breaks are the operation could be shorter or longer than anticipated. But, there shouldn't be anything for either of you to worry about. As I’ve said before it’s an operation I’ve successfully done many times before. If there aren't any questions we'll go ahead and get started.” She glances between the two of them, checking for confirmation.

They both nod and the doctor motions for someone else nearby as Inko squeezes his hand. “You'll be okay,” she murmurs, gently kissing his forehead before a nurse slips a mask over his nose and mouth.

“Breath deeply,” he tells him.

So Midoriya does.

There's nothing after that for a while.

The next time he wakes up, it's to Inko's wobbly smile. "Hi, baby," she murmurs softly, petting back his hair. "Welcome back."

He feels floaty, faraway. He lets his eyes flutter shut again.

He's still so tired.

"Get some more rest," she whispers.

So he does.

Reo stares down blankly at his phone, not paying attention to whatever is being said in class. It's a message sent from Izuku's phone, though obviously not sent by the boy himself.

Something in his chest feels tight.

Izuwuku 〉

Today 2:42 pm

Sorry to bother you during school, but I wanted

you to know that the surgery went well! Izuku

should be up for visitors tomorrow if you're still

able to come.

Reo sighs shakily, tension he doesn't remember ever having flooding out of him.

He's fine. He's fine.

His hands shake as he shoves back the tears threatening to leak out with so many people around. His breakdown can wait till he's alone. That doesn't prevent his body trying its hardest to let it happen where he sits. He bites down on his tongue with his back teeth, forcing himself to focus, forcing himself to hold out for just a little longer.

He's fine. Why are you crying? He's fine.

He bites down harder on his tongue.

He's fine.

But there's always that pesky little *'what if'*.

Izuwuku 〉

Today 2:56 pm

Thank you for telling me, I'll be by tomorrow after

school if he's still feeling up to it.

Tell him I'm glad he's okay.

Dr. Sui is a great doctor, the best Midoriya could've asked for. She explains everything to them in terms they can understand and hides nothing. She's a good doctor, too good. "We'll be keeping you under observation for at least another week."

Under normal circumstances Midoriya knows he wouldn't be here for more than a few days. They'd make sure he's stable and then cart him back home as soon as possible with his hands full of painkillers. But even if he'd directly told the woman that he *"didn't want to die",* she couldn't just let him off.

To them he's alive solely because of luck, solely because he hadn't chosen a building tall enough. The words, *"Take a swan dive off the roof,"* comes back to him.

He wonders what Bakugou would think about all of this.

"Once you get some more rest, Recovery Girl is set to make a visit," Dr. Sui informs him, "She warned that it will take a few sessions to get you completely healed, but that she'll get you patched up in no time. If it takes longer than we expect to get you healed then it may require an extra meeting or two with her outside the hospital. After she visits tomorrow we'll be moving you into a new room where you'll be able to stay until you're discharged."

His mother squeezes his hand, smile wobbly. Her eyes tell him she's ready for them to move past this, to become stronger, together.

It only makes his guilt worse.

Time passes slowly in the hospital. Inko brings his hero notebook from home to help him pass the time, but for what seems to be the first time in his life he doesn't even know what to write in it. So, he turns to his phone, he's reluctant to do much at first. He stays away from social media, instead clearing out his email and scrolling through his cluttered camera roll and barely coherent notes app. He tries his best just to keep himself occupied, but eventually despite his initial reluctance it's not long before he finds himself searching the internet for news on Piper.

There hadn't been any new footage of the vigilante for obvious reasons, but that certainly didn't mean his name had disappeared from online spaces. Somehow, whether police had intended for the information to get out or not, the internet had found out about Piper's involvement at the USJ. And, without any clear insight from heroes or police, were taking the story wherever they thought it should go.

He doesn't know whether or not to be surprised at the outcome of his search.

Pied Piper Participates In USJ Attack

Vigilante Pied Piper, Hero or Villain?

Pied Piper Joins UA Raid!

Vigilante Pied Piper, Dead After USJ Incident?

Police Silent After Pied Piper's Disappearance

Vigilante Labeled Villain After USJ Attack

Where Is Pied Piper?

A Villain in Disguise? Pied Piper at UA

Hunt for Piper Increases

Vigilante Pied Piper Turned Villain!

Where Is He Now? Pied Piper After the USJ

But the internet has more to offer him than the flashy headline titles

that turn his stomach.

Cawe ² @BCAsquard · 8h ago

WTF???? **PIPER** DIED??????

Suz » ITS MY BIRTHDAY🎉 @HeroSiMP · 6h ago

Wait what happened to **Piper** someone explain

🔥Todoroki Stan 🔥 @MulticoloredFlutist · 6h ago

Is it weird that I'm starting to stan Endeavor's kid??? Like he's not even a hero yet I just read about him defending **Piper** and??? Idkakashjfasdlfkj

rohan @dreaming4peace · 5h ago

My boy **Piper** did not get murked, unlike you i have faith in his ability to get out of literally any situation

Haha PP @vigilantpp · 3h ago

not **piper** showing up at the USJ and kicking villain ass, we do be stanning a king tho 👀👀

✧仮名✧ @KanaHaki · 3h ago

ENDEAVOR'S SON??? STICKING UP FOR **PIPER**?????? W H A T ? ? ? ? ?

Asahi🖉 @Pillagerpaath · 2h ago

Piper finally showing his true villainous colors after showing up at the USJ, we love to see it

Midoriya gnaws at the corner of his lip, hands shaking gently as he switches apps.

r/piedpiper · Posted by u/bteam365 two days ago

Is Piper Actually Dead???

489 upvotes

So I know that Piper was at the USJ and all, yada yada whatever, but I read that interview with Endeavor's son and??? As far as I know no one's so much as seen Piper recently and if he's as injured as that kid was saying he was… Im not really one to be pessimistic or anything but?? Im honestly scared for him

.

jackadaw 3.6k points · two days ago

honestly same, i hope he's alright

.

bbhaech 231 points · one day ago

I'm sure he's fine! He's probably got connections with some underground villain healer or something, even the bad guys have to get taken care of after all lmao

.

bigQ0 1k points · 20 hours ago

There's no way he managed to make it out of there alive, the hero commission could just be covering up his death or something

Everyone loves Piper, if he died because of a hero or something there would be a lot of fans out for blood but if they cover it up and Piper just 'goes missing' they'd never even have to take responsibility for anything

.

SpeeedRunner 421 points · 12 hours ago

Why would you say this, why would you put this thought in my head, the hero commission is SO shady if you look closely enough and this doesn't help their case with me AT ALL, but what you said makes perfect sense. At the end of the USJ battle there were a lot of heroes present and if Piper was as injured as people are implying then I see no chance of Piper just straight up escaping without some sort of help from a quirk. He was fully decked out in his usual gear and you expect me to believe that he managed to just slip away??? The HC has another thing coming if they think they can pull a fast one over on us like this. Piper has become more than just a vigilante, he's a generational ICON your popularity in the classroom can rise or fall based on your opinion of him alone. The people who support him aren't quiet about their love for him and they certainly wouldn't be quiet about his death if it got out he'd been killed by a hero. Logically your theory makes the most sense, it's happened before, the commission has a history of it, straying heroes, morally gray villains, civilians with out of control quirks. If Piper really is dead and if he really didn't get away then this is my new favorite theory as to why

tldr//: I completely agree, the hero commission has a history of doing similar things in the past to cover their tracks

.

HitMunP 12 points · 17 hours ago

If he is it's what he deserves

.

SansOfTyme 3.6k points · 2 hours ago

If Piper's dead I WILL CRY, idc where I am I'll just straight up burst into immediate tears

The night is long and lonely. Despite being as tired as he is it's hard for Izuku to even fall asleep. The hospital is quiet, but loud. The sounds he's unused to keep him up, tensing at every foreign noise.

He stares at the ceiling restlessly, counting the pockmarked ceiling tiles like dark stars just to keep his mind preoccupied. He doesn't

think of Piper, of Aizawa, of Eri, of Reo, of one Midoriya Inko laying in her own bed just as restless as he.

He doesn't think of the voice in his head. No matter how loud its howling gets he does not think of it.

He does not think of Overhaul, of The League, of one Bakugou Katsuki dreaming of his heroic rise to number one.

He does not think of any of them in his small, moonlit hospital room. His nails do not bite dangerous into his palms and his teeth do not bite harshly down on his tongue. Midoriya Izuku only ever stares at the ceiling tiles counting false stars.

This is the truth.

Lie.

Midoriya doesn't remember falling asleep, but the fact that he opens his eyes to daylight tells him all that he needs to know. A nurse comes in to ask how he's feeling and he gives them a vague answer about feeling fine. He expects Inko to have long been at work by now, but to his dismay she arrives not even an hour later with none other than Ji-Woo in tow.

His instructor doesn't look or act any different than usual and somehow this fact manages to put him at ease. Both Inko and a majority of the hospital staff, not including Dr. Sui, had been tiptoeing around him since his story had come out. He couldn't fault any of them, they couldn't know he was a liar, couldn't know that their tiptoeing set him on edge. They couldn't know that treating him like glass only makes him feel like he'd been flung back into his darker elementary school days. They couldn't know and he certainly wouldn't be the one to tell them.

That's why Ji-Woo's normalcy feels all the more like a gift from God. "How're you feeling, kid? Surgery do you any good?"

Midoriya huffs a laugh, "I wouldn't know. I've been on some pretty nasty pain meds since I got here. Doesn't feel much different, just achy in different places than before." He smiles gently, testing the feel of it back on his lips. It feels almost foreign, completely mismatched compared to the state of his head.

He smiles despite feeling useless sitting in this bed, waiting for others to help him when it should be the other way around.

“That’s good to hear.”

Inko gives his hand a squeeze as she tells him good morning, asking how he’d slept.

He lies of course.

He’s always lying about simple things like these.

His mother sets a bag of spare clothes on the nearby chair before taking a short leave to get both her and Ji-Woo a bit of coffee.

“Sorry about before,” Izuku murmurs in her absence, “I didn’t scare the new kids too much, did I?”

Ji-Woo lets out a tired sigh, “That’s not an issue, Midoriya. You shouldn't be worrying about something like that right now.”

“They dropped out, didn’t they.”

There’s a short spell of silence before the woman gives in, “Two of them did. But, I shouldn’t have made you teach them, you only came in in that state because you’d made me a promise, didn’t you?” A long, suffering sigh escapes her, “I should’ve stopped you the moment you walked in. Maybe it wouldn’t have been as bad as it did.”

Maybe, he replies silently to himself. *But there's no telling if that doctor of Giran's could've done a surgery like the one I needed. Maybe…* he repeats, *maybe this was for the best.*

“It's not your fault,” Izuku murmurs, closing his eyes tiredly.

“It's not yours either, Midoriya.”

The words are nice to hear, perhaps in another situation they might even be comforting. But as it is the teen doesn't so much as believe it for even a moment.

His mother comes back soon after, two cups of coffee and Izuku’s apparent breakfast balanced on a cafeteria tray. They talk a bit about school as he eats, chattering about his classes and teachers and his new almost-friends that he was starting to make. Inko smiles sweetly

the whole time but it's obvious that she's not entirely there.

(Finding out your kid tried to kill himself can do that to you.)

Ji-Woo doesn't stay long, but it's long enough to keep his mind occupied. Inko on the other hand hardly leaves his side. If he's being honest he enjoys the company, it's been awhile since either of them have really sat down and enjoyed one another's presence.

It's so easy to forget your hardships when someone smiles at you as brightly as Inko does at him. But, it's even easier to remember them when that smile falls even a fraction.

“Look what you've done to her, you've mangled her heart so horribly, You, the singularity of all her worries.”

There are many truths that Midoriya has denied in order to keep himself sane. This is not one of them. This is a truth that he holds close to him, one that he refuses to deny.

“I love you, Mom.”

The woman looks up from the magazine she'd been reading. She looks a little surprised at the sudden statement, but smiles at him nonetheless. “I love you too, sweety.”

“I love you,” he croaks again, grief crawling up his throat. He bows his head. “I love you so much.”

He's angry at himself for the tears that leak from his eyes. He has no right to be upset. He'd done this to himself, he'd done this even knowing it would hurt the people he cared about most.

The chair she's in creaks as she stands, wrapping him in a tight hug. She speaks firmly, as if able to read his thoughts, “There's nothing for you to apologize for, Izuku.”

But in reality there's so many things he has to apologize for, so many things where he must beg for both her forgiveness and the forgiveness of others. How many people has he forsaken just to end up where he is now, lying in a hospital bed, weak, useless, crying for the sake of the people he's hurt.

“Tsukauchi-kun’s supposed to be coming to see you after school, but

only if you're feeling up for it," Inko says softly after he's calmed down.

If he's being honest he's not up for it. He doesn't think he'll ever be 'up for it', not after all the lies he'd told. Reo knows many things, but he hadn't inherited his uncle's quirk. He trusts Izuku too easily.

No, I lie to him too easily.

Midoriya plasters on a fake smile. "Sounds good!"

He lies to everyone too easily.

True to his word Reo knocks at his room door less than an hour after school lets out. He doesn't look any different than usual and Izuku can almost pretend there's nothing wrong when his friend walks with no hint of distress on his face.

Almost.

"Midoriya." The teen smiles at him so easily. "How are you feeling?"

Izuku takes the words like a physical blow. His last name on Reo's tongue rings against his ears like blasphemy. The boy stares at his friend with wide eyes, sun sinking further into his chest. It dips lower and lower into the vast ocean beneath it, falling like the last great sunset and paining his insides a vibrant vermillion.

Midoriya doesn't know how to respond.

"It's good to see you again Tsukauchi-kun," Inko says brightly in his stead, happy to see the two friends reunited. "How was school?"

After a few minutes of small talk that leaves Izuku more shaken and breathless, Inko steps out of the room. "I just need to make a quick call, I'll be back soon," she says with a smile, leaving the two boys alone.

As soon as she's set foot out of the room Reo's smile falls, lips settling into a thin line. He sits quietly in the chair next to his bed, taking his mother's place. He doesn't say anything, doesn't do anything, doesn't even look at Midoriya. But, eventually he speaks, voice low in the small hospital room. "My mom told me you were in the hospital for an attempted suicide."

Midoriya tenses immediately, already fearing the direction of the conversation.

“I found an article that told me about Piper's *real* injuries… but even then I still questioned what my mother’d said. Even knowing the truth I wondered whether or not you'd actually tried to kill yourself.”

Midoriya can feel himself breaking into a cold sweat, the machine tracking his heart rate spiking higher. Neither of them so much as spare it a glance. “It was a lie, I… I wouldn't. I just needed a—”

“Was it really a lie though?” Reo hisses softly, cutting him off. He's trying to reign in his anger, trying to keep his voice down in a place with so many spying ears. “After what you did? Is it really a lie?”

“What?” Izuku asks, startled by the question.

“It doesn’t seem like a lie, not to me. Not because I believe you wanted to kill yourself, but because no matter your intentions you almost did.” He takes a moment to compose himself, but he doesn’t know how much it helps. “You lied to me, Midoriya. You were this hurt and you lied to me about it,” he bites out. “You had to have *surgery*. This could've *killed* you. I know I joked about not coming to me if you punctured a lung, but I never thought that–" Reo chokes out, stopping himself before he can say anymore.

“The police knew the extent of Piper’s injuries,” Midoriya tries explaining desperately, leaning forward from his spot on the bed. “If one of their previous suspects had shown up at the hospital so soon after the attack it- it would've been game over for me,” he insists.

But Reo shakes his head violently. “No,” he hisses, “Game over would be you rolling over in your sleep with a broken rib and punching a hole through your lung with no one any wiser. *Game over* is your mother waking up the next morning and finding you *dead. That's game over,”* the teen chokes out, blinking away angry tears. “We could've come up with an excuse. You could've let me *help* you. You could've *trusted* me,” Reo spits. “But you didn't. And now you're in the hospital anyway so I guess God doesn't want you dead just yet because that's the only reason you're still alive.”

His words leave Midoriya speechless, monitor beeping wildly in time with his heart. Reo glances at it only briefly before pushing himself up.

“I should go,” he murmurs. “Tell your mom I said bye.”

Izuku doesn't know what he can say to make the other boy stay. Maybe there's nothing, maybe there is, either way Midoriya can't come up with anything in time before he's watching Reo slip out of the room.

"Hello? Yes, my name is Midoriya Inko. I'm calling in regard to my son, Midoriya Izuku. I'd like to talk with his homeroom teacher if that's possible."

Midoriya feels numb watching Recovery Girl hobble into his dreary hospital room just a few hours after Reo's short visit. It only takes one glance at him for the woman to see through his exhaustion. "This'll take longer than I thought," Chiyo sighs. Inko shifts nervously beside him, waiting for clarification that never comes.

Dr. Sui steps into the room behind her. "Shuzenji-san's quirk exchanges vitality for healing, the less vitality a patient has the more sessions needed so she doesn't end up straining them too heavily."

His mother nods along almost reluctantly before the hero makes her way towards the bed, using a small stool to stand on in order to reach him. "Seems you've done quite a number on yourself," she sighs. "You'll be very tired after this, so just try to get as much sleep as you can before I see you again."

She plants a gentle kiss on his cheek. It's a weird feeling being healed like this. He's had experience with healing quirks in the past, childhood bullies had frequently left him subjected to them. But this is nothing like any of the other healing quirks that've been used on him. His side tingles violently, almost uncomfortably, but it's over within seconds and he feels like the life has been sucked out of him. Midoriya droops forward a bit, drained and somehow more exhausted than before. It's a new type of exhaustion, different from the late night vigilante work he's used to.

Sleep comes easy to him like this.

Tsukauchi reaches absentmindedly for his phone as he works, picking up without checking the caller ID.

"Musutafu Police, Quirk Crimes Division, Detective Tsukauchi Naomasa speaking."

“Nao? Thank God you picked up finally,” Misaki sighs over the speaker.

The detective tenses, looking away from his report to double check the caller. “Misaki, did something happen?”

He can hear the sound of her pacing in the background. “I'm supposed to leave tomorrow for a conference in Tokyo,” she explains, “I’ll only be gone for two days but I need you to stay with Reo.”

Naomasas feels himself relax, going back to proofreading over his report on Piper as he speaks. “And you sounded so serious when I picked up. He’s seventeen now, Misaki,” the detective chuckles, adding notes along the margin of the paper as he goes. “He knows how to take care of himself.”

“I-No listen,” she insists. “Reo's friend, the Midoriya boy? He tried to commit suicide, Nao,” she tells him quietly, voice dropping to a whisper to keep, who he assumes is Reo, from listening in.

The detective freezes at the words, pen hovering over the page. “Suicide?” he asks in disbelief. “Is he alright?”

There’s a deep sigh on the other end of the line. “Physically he’ll be fine, but that doesn't change the fact that he tried, you know? I’m a nurse, not a psychologist there’s no telling what’s going on in that poor kid’s head. Reo's taking it pretty hard. He went to see him this afternoon, but it’s obvious he didn’t stay very long,” Misaki murmurs. “That's why I want someone to stay with him. I know you're busy with everything happening on the news so I tried calling Makoto but she wouldn’t answer the phone. I can just skip the conference if you can’t.”

Naomasa sets the pen aside, leaning back in his seat as he thinks back to his last meeting with the Midoriya boy. “I can, I won't be able to be around the whole time, but I can be there.”

“Thank you,” Misaki sighs. There’s a beat of silence. “You know… I walked in on Midoriya crying in Reo's room one time,” she murmurs, “I don't think Midoriya noticed I was there, but Reo must've been trying to help him through it all this time, right? I'm worried about him, Nao.”

Tsukauchi rubs at his forehead, fighting back an oncoming headache. “He'll be okay. He's a strong kid.”

“Midoriya’s his only real friend.”

“I'll take care of Reo,” Naomasa reassures her, “You said the kid would be okay, it's just a matter of time before they're back to how they usually are.”

“I don’t know if normal is good enough anymore,” she whispers quietly, “Normal is what led us here.”

Chapter End Notes

> KJDSAFHJASDLKJFDS ITS BEEN A LONG TWO WEEKS I KNOW so I start classes again on monday so there's a strong possibility of that messing with my usual update schedule, it's my last semester and I have to start applying to grad schools soon so there's gonna be a lot going on, sorry in advance, I might up the weekly updates to bi weekly ones because of that or just go back to sporadic updates who knows it just depends on how crazy everything is Anyways! I hope you all enjoyed this chapter! Until next time!

Conjunction

Chapter Notes

TW :// talk of death and suicide

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fan art!!

raibun x

rey-rambles x x

eggs-and-dragonflies

vsversus

tiltedcloudz

sir-divvin

blackholeca x

Yamada stares blankly ahead in disbelief.

Midnight eyes him curiously. “What happened?”

He doesn't even know what he can say in this situation. This isn't information he can just share with just anyone, not Midnight, not Shouta.

“I just wanted to check in and make sure Izuku’s doing well in school, not… not academically or anything, but friend wise. Is he getting along with his classmates?” She asks him in a small voice. “He didn't have any friends at his last school and… I…” A sniffle sounds on the other end of the line. “I just want to know what happened. I want to know what made him think trying to kill himself was the only way out!”

Her sobs resound inside his chest, rattling his ribs.

Mic had lost students before. The general education department was a last ditch pit stop for hero hopefuls not good enough to get in through exams. It wasn’t uncommon to have someone… Every few years…

“It’s nothing,” he murmurs.

They both know it’s not nothing.

Mic was not the only one pondering the life cycle of those younger than him.

In all technicalities Shouta shouldn’t be here. But, he’d invited himself in after the rumors of Piper’s death had started taking hold in the media, plastering almost every local news headline. Even publications that’d never so much as touched the topic of heroes were reporting on the vigilante’s supposed death.

Aizawa shifts in his seat, peeking out from his mass of bandages.

One of the detectives to the left of him speaks up. “You have to at least come to terms with the idea, Tsukauchi. There’s a possibility that the kid’s dead.”

“Sure it’s a possibility, but it’s not one that I’m willing to consider,” Naomasa scowls, “There’s no use in assuming the worst. Until we’ve got a body he’s to be presumed alive.”

“He's right. If we tell the press that he’s dead and it turns out he’s not, they'll have our heads,” someone else says, stepping in. “Not to mention Eraserhead was injured much worse than Piper was and he turned out fine.”

Aizawa’s eyes narrow at the woman. “Define fine,” he asks her, voice muffled by his bandages.

She looks almost surprised to see him there. “My apologies,” she murmurs sheepishly.

Toshinori’s deflated form, All Might’s 'assistant’ shifts uncomfortably in his seat, before steering the conversation to an easier topic. “Do we know how he was able to get away in the first place?”

“Isn’t it possible that the League warped him out?”

Tsukauchi pinches at the bridge of his nose with a tired sigh. “He wasn’t teamed with the League. We’ve been over this. They had no reason to help him.”

Tamakawa’s whiskers twitch nervously, hesitantly eyeing the

detective. “I don’t believe they’re talking about helping him, sir.”

Shouta catches the man's stiffening posture.

“If he really did sabotage the League’s plans then it’s likely that they’d want revenge,” Tamakawa continues softly.

“The League wasn't in any state to be making petty revenge stops,” Toshinori states. He coughs nervously into his fist when everyone's eyes flicker towards him. “From what I hear at least.”

“The leader was childish though,” Aizawa cuts in, words muffled. “I wouldn’t put it past him to try and pull something like that.”

“Isn’t it more likely that he got help from someone?” Naomasa glances around the table. “Hound Dog’s account has Piper’s scent mixing with a new one near UA’s main building before both were lost in the crowd of evacuating students.”

“That doesn’t mean the League couldn’t have intervened somewhere off campus while Piper was escaping,” another detective buts in.

“There’s no evidence to prove that.”

“There’s no evidence to disprove it either.”

Aizawa can already tell this meeting is going nowhere. No one here knows anymore about the vigilante’s whereabouts than the media does. But, until he can start patrolling again he’s stuck with the information other people gather.

“Damn problem child,” he huffs quietly. *You better not have died on me.*

Naomasa can feel a sharp headache forming behind his eyes. He hadn't been at the scene when Piper was carried out of the USJ not even a week ago. But he'd heard, he'd heard so much about what sort of state the kid had been in, *might still be in.* It’s all over the news, and social media. It's the only thing his coworkers seem to ask him about anymore.

“So what do you think actually happened with that vigilante?”

“Enough,” the detective sighs defeatedly. “As it stands, the fact is that Piper made it off campus, with whom we don’t know. And it's not something we can confirm without eyewitness testimony.”

“Was there really no one that saw him leave?” Toshinori asks. “Looking like he did he had to have at least drawn a few eyes.”

“It could be the work of a quirk,” someone suggests. “Maybe invisibility or some sort of transformation? If not Piper's then possibly his accomplice’s. And if that's the case it'll be even harder to track him down.”

Tsukauchi pinches at the bridge of his nose. “It’s never been easy to track him down. Besides, if it was Piper's I'm certain he would've used something like that beforehand. Either way,” Naomasa seethes, “Piper's to be assumed alive until proven otherwise, am I clear?”

There's a chorus of quiet agreements throughout the room and Naomasa nods curtly, checking the time. “That'll be the end of the meeting if no one has anything else to add. Make sure to get some sleep. Our hunt for Piper isn’t over. The public’s stepping up pressure on our search so we’ll be in hot water if we don’t find anything soon.” He pauses on his way out the door. “And Eraserhead? Stop showing up at the precinct. At the very least don't come back til you get those bandages off.”

Several goodbyes go up as he leaves, Sansa following him out. He offers the detective a quick pat on the back. “We’ll find Piper,” he reassures him. “He's clever, but he’s only a kid. We’ll catch up eventually.”

Naomasa deflates a little before he watches the feline set off to pack up his belongings for the night.

He'll be okay, Tsukauchi tells himself.

But there’s always that pesky little *‘what if’*.

Naomasa unlocks the door to Misaki’s dark apartment. It’s not very late, barely past eleven. He’d made sure to leave earlier than usual so Reo wouldn’t have to spend so much time alone.

But, the lights that usually illuminate the bottom of his nephew’s door are eerily absent.

Concern settles in his chest as he slips his shoes off and shrugs out of his jacket. Tsukauchi pauses outside of the boy's room. “Reo?” He presses his ear to the door quietly, listening for any sign of movement

before he knocks gently and pushes the door open. “Reo?” Naomasa calls again, quieter this time.

A streak of light from behind reveals Reo's still form on his bed, curled beneath the covers and facing the wall.

“Did you already eat?”

There's no response from the boy, not even so much as a shifting of position. Tsukauchi sighs, gently closing the door again. Misaki had left Reo in his care, but even so he wasn't sure how to go about handling it. What do you tell a kid who's best friend tried to kill himself?

“Just try to be there for him,” Naomasa tests, trying to plan out what to say. *But what if Reo can't handle being there for him?*

Tsukauchi has talked people down before, it's an occasional part of his job, one that he hasn't always been good at. But this was different. He's never had to deal with the aftermath of someone's attempt. The detective lets out a tired sigh, rummaging through the fridge for something to eat until he finds some food that Misaki had left for the two of them. He heats up a small portion in the microwave, leaning back against the counter, eyes piercing through Reo's bedroom door. The microwave’s hum is quiet, but in the silence of the apartment it sounds so unbearably loud.

What can I tell him? What does he need to hear? What does he want to hear? What would I want to hear?

“Piper's alive, he's recovering. The only thing you can do for him now is to be there.”

Naomasa shakes the voice out of his head. It's not what he'll need to help Reo, but… maybe he doesn’t need to say anything at all. Maybe he just needs to be there for the boy.

Maybe all he needs to do is *listen.*

23 · Trending in Japan

#rippiper

12,368 Tweets

PM Fucker™ @PreeeesentMic1 · 3h

FUCK OFF FUCK OFF THIS BETTER BE A JOKE I WILL CRY **#rippiper**

Teacup @GiornosSimp · 3h

#rippiper i honestly hate this bird app so much, stop acting like Piper's dead!! nothings been confirmed yet

✧LXVX✧ @l3x_v3x · 2h

Maybe if they'd stanned LXVX☘ **#RipPiper**

Foot Store CEO @f00tcryptiid · 3h

SOMEONE PLEASE EXPLAIN WHAT DID I MISS WHY IS THIS TRENDING??!?!!??!?! **#RIPPIPER** ???????

Simp City Resident @zawabado_garfnla · 2h

#rippiper 🫦✊

Tommy @tommyinnit · 2h

rip to the biggest man out there 👑 **#rippiper**

IMpostER @AmongUsss · 1h

stop trending **#rippiper** it's not even confirmed quit freaking people out it's annoying

Nana's Thighs 🫦 @BCAsquared · 2h

okay but where's the proof 👁👄👁 **#RipPiper**

SanSan @yourFB1agent · 1h

#rippiper ? stop saying he's dead??

ducky stan @duchesssss · 1h

Fuck this one actually hurts tho **#rippiper**

THICCY PURPLE @Carnagee765

NOOOOOOOOOOO **#RIPPIPER** 😭😭😭😭

Izuku finds that there's lots of time to think in hospitals, especially in psych wards. It's in this new, barren room that they've placed him in where the boy contemplates death. Not the death of Midoriya Izuku, but of the vigilante Pied Piper. He contemplates letting it all go, letting everyone think he's dead. He contemplates giving them no proof of life, of throwing his tattered clothes in some alley, of washing his contact down the drain.

Midoriya has saved *so many people.* And it's in moments like these that the faces of those people come to mind.

Some look grateful, others scared.

These are the faces he's spent so long agonizing over, the faces of strangers in need. But more than them, his mother's grief stricken face haunts him. Ji-Woo's concern, Reo's cool anger, it all keeps him awake at night.

That's why he thinks about it, that's why he ponders the death of his vigilante persona. Because protecting his loved ones happiness is the one thing he hasn't been able to do during an entire year of vigilantism. He's never been able to balance the two and the thought of their happiness lures him towards passivity.

It's a coin with two sides. It's only ever been one or the other and he can't stand to weigh his loved ones' happiness against the safety of

others any longer.

He's been selfish, in his own way, by disregarding the hurt he was subjecting those around him to. Midoriya was supposed to help people, to save them, but in the end he's only been hurting the ones he cares for the most.

The death of the vigilante.

It's tempting.

He can go back to focusing on school and sleep and he can repair his relationship with Reo and his mother and patch things up the best he can. After the story he told, Inko's unlikely to leave his side anytime soon. She'll need him, desperately. She'll need reassurance that it won't happen again.

He's still not scared of death, even after coming so close to it. But the thought of his loved ones in tears at his passing is unbearable to even think of. There's still so many things he has to tell them, so many 'thank you's and 'sorry's and confessions that he's yet to speak. He feels a desperate urge to speak all of them, to let the storm waters raging within him flood out from every porous cell he owns.

Instead he writes them all down in his notebook, nestled between the countless pages of hero notes, stuffed into every free space he can find. Izuku writes every apology he can think of, every confession, every sin. He writes his regrets as if he's dying, writes all the things he wishes he could do. His words are messy, hardly legible in his haste to get them out.

Midoriya tries hard to keep himself from crying, but in the end he can't stop himself from doing so. He keeps it quiet though, pinches his lips in and continues to write as if this is his final will. He cries so quietly in that empty room with its empty extra bed and its rounded bathroom doors and its barren cubby bins filled with only an extra change of clothes. He cries for a long time, cries till he gives himself a headache, cries till his eyes hurt and his nose runs uncontrollably. He cries until he physically can't anymore.

He studies the book in the dying light with its tear stained pages and its too honest words and he closes it quietly.

He'll regret it all in the morning.

Even now he thinks of burning it as soon as he can, of flushing the

pages he'd marred with such dangerous confessions.

For now, he hides it beneath his pillow, safe from the eyes of those who wish to indulge in his well kept secrets.

He hides it. And he sleeps.

Recovery girl visits again on the fourth day, leaving him drained but feeling better than he has in weeks. It's easier to get around with the effect of her quirk, he doesn't have to be as careful with how he moves and doesn't need as much help as he did before. And pain meds take care of the majority of any remaining aches and pains. Inko no longer stays with him all day, but she always visits after work to walk with him around the hospital. There's a grassy courtyard in the middle of the ward, small, but large enough to accommodate a few large trees and a little koi pond that has an artificial waterfall flowing into it.

They camp at the bench in front of it, taking a break to watch the fish mingle with one another.

“Your father always wanted to have a koi pond,” Inko tells him quietly. She doesn't look away from the pond.

Beside her Izuku tenses.

“He had such big dreams, much bigger than what we were able to accomplish on our own. His expectations were too high and he was always disappointed because of that,” she whispers. A gentle smile tugs weakly at her lips as she tracks one of the koi with her eyes. “You've got his dreamer qualities.”

Something acrid stirs in his chest and he shifts uncomfortably in his seat, unsure of what to say in the growing silence. *She doesn't want me to turn out like he did,* he tells himself silently, *She doesn't want me to grow bitter at the world.* But, being compared to the man who'd abandoned them will sting no matter the intentions.

Inko takes a deep breath, smile slowly fading. “You don't have to explain all of it to me, I'm not entitled to any answers. I want you to remember that. No one who demands answers from you is entitled to them. But…” she trails off, “I just wonder if there's anything I could've done to help you sooner. Was there anything I could've done?” she murmurs, hands folded neatly in her lap, voice small, “Is there anything I *can* do? I want you to be able to tell me anything, 'Zuku. I

want you to be happy, but I need to know what I can do to help you get there." Her voice cracks, and the boy can see from the corner of his eye that she bites harshly into her bottom lip, staring straight ahead in defiance of any tears.

Midoriya can't say he wasn't expecting this conversation, but that in no way means he was at all prepared for it. His fingers curl into the fabric of his sweatpants, nervously staring at his lap. "I don't know," he murmurs softly. "I thought I was fine. I *was* happy," he stresses, "I really was." He lets his eyes fall closed. "I was happier than I'd been in a long time," he tells her in a small voice.

"Then–" she trails off hoarsely.

The unfinished question hangs dangerously between them.

"Then why?"

Sometimes that happiness would just disappear.

"There were times where… where it would all just vanish. All the hard work I'd done to be happy would disappear without a trace. Those moments were usually never very long, sometimes only a few seconds, but–"

–that's all it takes, goes unsaid.

"I don't think there was anything *anyone* could've done in those moments," he continues softly instead.

"I should've known after that letter," she murmurs thickly, "That you wouldn't have been as okay as you seemed. You were always very strong in that way, keeping your hurt bottled up where it couldn't affect anyone else."

"It wasn't—" he cuts himself off, thinking. She wasn't wrong. Hadn't that been where all of this started? Hadn't that been where vigilantism became a substitute for dreams deferred?

"But, honey," she whispers, voice cracking, "Those things build up. They build up and they explode. Even if it hurts other people, even if it hurts me. I'd rather hear it than see you lying in that hospital bed again." The tears that she'd been holding back finally flood forth, teetering precariously at the corners of her eyes.

The waterfall trickles in the background. A koi flashes its pearly tail

above the water.

“You have to find your own reasons to live,” she cries, voice breaking. Her head bows over her lap, tears falling relentlessly. “You have to choose everyday to keep going, even if it's hard, even if it's more painful to continue,” she sobs as something in his chest clenches painfully. “You have to *choose* to live. Because no one else can do it for you! You have to choose to be stronger than the weakest part of yourself, Izuku!”

Pied Piper’s Death Explained

#piedpiper #vigilante #news

5,638,249 views · 3 days ago

Comments 7,384

fox_boy42 · 1 day ago

I…. I don't know what to say

Nakamura Aiko · 23 hours ago

NOT PIPER MAN HE WAS THE ONLY PERSON THAT MADE THIS SHIT WORTH IT 😭😭😭

MirukoSimp · 23 hours ago

I THOUGHT ALL THE HEADLINES WERE JUST BOOMERS BEING DUMB BUT YOU'RE TELLING ME IT'S REAL W H A T 💔😭

theERET · 20 hours ago

Piper was a symbol of our generation, they will be missed ✊

greenapocalypse · 16 hours ago

why tf does everyone keep saying he's dead

The conversation with his mother haunts him, stalks him in the halls and sits beside him in bed. It studies him as he eats, stares as he watches the city breathe through the hospital's window. It cries out to him in his sleep, choking him with cold, clammy hands wrapped around his throat.

He's never really wanted to die, no… he's never purposefully sought it. And in that sense he'd never actually *chosen* to live either.

Part of Midoriya is desperate to go back to school, to revive at least a little sense of normalcy. He wants to sleep in his own bed, wants to eat Inko's katsudon. He wants to crawl through Reo's window and watch him work silently for hours on end without ever feeling the obligation to speak because their friendship wasn't the kind that depended on it.

He wants to forget about vigilantism.

He wants to be a kid, a friend, a son. He wants to be all of the things that he'd failed to be for the last year.

He wants to *choose* to live.

There's a quiet knock that resounds through the room and the teen glances up to see a familiar head of hair peeking through the door's small plexiglass window. Midoriya had been expecting to be sent what school work he'd missed, but what he hadn't expected was for it to be sent in such an… *old fashioned* manner.

An attempt at school sanctioned friendship?

"Come in," chokes out in surprise.

Shinsou Hitoshi slips his head through the door, dark circles just as bad as they'd been the last time Midoriya had seen the boy. "Hey."

Shinsou glances around the room briefly as he walks in, recognition sparking in his eyes. Psych wards always have a distinct feel to them, cold and barren. Their rooms aren't as furnished as your average hospital patient's, it feels child proofed. The bathroom door is rounded on the top, cubby holes tucked into the wall, power cables locked behind bolted wall panels.

“How long are you stuck in here for?” Shinsou asks, stepping further into the room, tucking himself into the chair by his bed. It's an innocent enough question, but with situational context it offers a sort of near solidarity that eases the tension between them because *he understands.*

“Another two days,” Izuku answers.

“Good,” Shinsou grunts, “Lunch’s been pretty boring without you.”

Midoriya lets out a surprised laugh, accepting the homework the other teen digs out of his bag. It's not as much as he'd been anticipating.

“Guess you'll be out in time for the sports festival then. Do you think you'll be up for participating?”

Midoriya pauses, staring at the assignment sheets for a long moment, genuinely contemplating the question. There's countless pros and cons to participating in UA’s televised sports festival. The discovery of his vigilante past being the largest of them. “I'm not sure. I should be healed up by then, but–” he trails off, weighing his choices.

“No need to come to a decision right away,” Shinsou chuckles, leaning back in his seat. “But hey, if you decide you don't want to then that’s less competition for me.” The teen offers him a lazy grin.

Midoriya can't help but laugh in response, side aching gently. “Best not to encourage me then.”

The other shrugs. “Why not? I never said I wouldn't enjoy the challenge.”

Izuku’s smile comes easily.

“By the way, I left my phone number in there somewhere if you've got any questions about the homework. I don't know how much help I'd be, but you never know.”

“Thank you,” Midoriya says softly, “Sorry for dragging you all the way out here.”

Shinsou waves him off. “It’s on the way home. That's why Yamada Sensei asked me to come. I assume he was thinking I’d say no so he could come himself. Guess I ruined his plans,” the teen chuckles.

“I can see that. I’m sure he’s disappointed,” Izuku teases.

“I’ll text you if he gives me any dirty looks during class tomorrow, how's that sound?”

“Sounds like you better make sure not to get caught texting in class.”

“That feels like a challenge, Midoriya Izuku.”

Shinsouhno 〉

Today 2:14 pm

[image: blurry photo of classroom 1-C, half of the image is obscured by another student, the other half shows a blurred Present Mic at the front of the room.]

ngl almost got caught with this one

HSJSHSKDHKD WHY WOULD YOU

ACTUALLY DO ITBDNDBDNDB

i thought itd be funny

…. I… I won't deny laughing…

mission accomplished then

Chapter End Notes

ITS LITERALLY BEEN A MONTH SINCE I POSTED SKDFASKDLJF
If yall follow tumblr then you probably know that life has been wild lmao sdkfhasdjf im in my last semester of college and gotta deal with shit for grad school on top of catching covid of all shit (im fine dont worry!) and a hella stroke of writers block BUT I FINISHED FINALLY I DID IT SO HELL YEAH, THANKS TO MY BETA AVERY FOR HELPING WITH THE END OF THE CHAPTER THAT LAST PART WAS ALL THEIR IDEA SO SAY THANK YOU BECAUSE THIS WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSTED WITHOUT THEM ASDKFHASDKFJDASF
Unfortunately updates are back to being sporadic for the forceable future, I want to be able to update at least twice a month but idk how achievable that is with everything that's going on (it's only going to get worse from here unfortunately since i havent even started applying for grad schools) but i promise you I won't be abandoning this fic, never ever I love it to much □

ANYWAYS I HOPE YOU ALL ENJOYED IT IT WAS ONE HELL OF A CHAPTER TO WRITE LMAO UNTIL NEXT TIME!!

ps. I changed from AO3 username from blackhole_called_anime to blackholeca to match all my other social media accounts so just heads up on that!

Polarization

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Art!!!!!!! I think I got all of them o-o

vsversus

spacing-outttt x x

Friendly Naborhood Disapointment x x

tiltedcloudz

thoughtfullightfriendstudent

AveryArts13 x

blackholeca x x x x x

“Midoriya,” Reo murmurs softly, “Why'd you do it?”

The two friends find themselves at the top of an impossibly high building, looking out across Musutafu. Reo stares longing out across the city. April brings with it marginally warmer weather, but the nights retain the bite of winter, especially at this height.

Reo never turns to look at him. “I want to know why,” he says, pulling himself onto the building's ledge. “I want to know if you felt the same.”

Izuku feels desperation claw its way up his throat. He can't move, can't speak.

“Midoriya, was it a lie? Or do you really think I won't be able to fly?”

Midoriya wakes up sobbing the boy's name. Chest heaving, body shuttering. A passing nurse slips into his room, crouching beside his bed. She gently tries getting his attention as he hunches in on himself,

clutching at his chest.

He doesn't want to be seen like this.

Another person enters, talking briefly with the nurse.

He doesn't want to be here.

Someone holds his hand gently and he cries harder.

He doesn't want Reo to ever feel the way he feels now.

Izuku technically has two doctors. One for his physical wounds, the other for his mental ones. The only one he actually likes is Dr. Sui.

His new one asks too many pushy questions. The man's coffee eyes are cold, uncaring. They're eyes that have seen too much and now lack the ability to properly care for other people's problems. He puts on a bit of a show in front of his mother to keep her from making complaints, but never when Izuku faces him alone.

That's why Midoriya doesn't have a problem lying directly to his face when he comes in early the next morning.

"Are nightmares something you have frequently?" The man asks in a monotone voice.

"Not usually."

He doesn't need to give them any reasons to keep him longer than they already have either.

The doctor nods silently. "That's good then. If they become a problem let either me or one of the nurses know."

The looming form of Dr. Sui slips into the room just behind the man, ducking beneath the doorway so her horns don't catch. The much shorter form of his mother slips in just after her. A gentle smile lights up Dr. Sui's face as she sets her eyes on Midoriya. "How are you feeling?"

Izuku offers the women a wobbly smile. "Much better. Morning, Mom."

"Good morning, sweety."

The other doctor gives the two women a silent nod before disappearing out of the room. Sui's coal tar eyes narrow as she watches the man leave while Inko takes a seat in the empty chair beside the boy's bed.

"Did you sleep well?"

"Not particularly," he replies, scratching absentmindedly at the back of his neck.

"Well, hospital beds aren't known for being the most comfortable," Dr. Sui cuts in, "But, it's already almost time for you to leave us so hopefully it won't be a problem for much longer," she tells him with a kindly smile, her eyes tracking the movement of his hand. "Now that you're almost ready to leave I think it's important to talk about some of your options moving forward."

The two Midoriya's nod along quietly, mood shifting to something a little more serious as the conversation changes.

"From what I've been told you should only need one more session with Recovery Girl before you're fully recovered physically. Shuzenji-san is going to give you a few extra days of rest before she sees you again, which means your next session will be at UA. I mentioned this before, but I wanted to remind you to not get your hopes up unnecessarily about your scars. They'll fade somewhat, but most of your wounds are likely to remain scarred, especially around the nape of your neck. It was allowed to heal somewhat before you came to us so both it and your surgical scar are likely to remain noticeable. Recovery Girl's quirk is a miraculous one and speeds up the body's natural healing process, but scars are still a part of that process."

"Of course," Midoriya murmurs. *What is another scar to a body like mine that is already littered with them?*

"For you it is yet another mark of failure," the voice in his head answers jovially.

From the corner of his eye Izuku can see his mother tense somewhat. He gently bites down on his tongue, keeping his thoughts from wandering too far.

"Your other doctor should have already discussed the necessity of therapy. If he hasn't yet I'd be happy to talk it over with you both." Midoriya feels himself tense, his still tender ribs protesting. When there's no answer from either of them Dr. Sui pushes on. "UA

obviously has their own counselor, but not everyone finds that he's a good match for them."

Izuku will admit that the thought of having to go to therapy hadn't crossed his mind. That was a mistake on his part. A dangerous mistake. Because the only *free* therapist that the Midoriya's had any access to was UA's, and UA's therapist was none other than the man that they had likely used to try and track Piper's coppery scent after his escape. Inui Ryo, The Hunting Dog Hero: Hound Dog.

"From what I've seen of Midoriya-kun's personality my personal opinion would be to refer you to another office. Finding a good therapist is, for lack of a better example, similar to shopping for clothes. Not everyone that you try will be the right fit for you and it's important to remember that you need to feel comfortable with whoever you choose." She looks between the two of them. "Several of the local therapist offices see UA students and alumni at discounted prices. I can have a list made up if that's something that you would be interested in."

But no matter how discounted, therapy costs money, money that his mother doesn't have. Izuku can feel his panic rising. Being in close proximity with Hound Dog was dangerous enough, let alone an onslaught of therapy sessions with him. Midoriya's done too much to keep his lie intact to have it all end with the hero recognizing his scent.

"That would be wonderful, thank you," Inko murmurs, squeezing his hand gently. "If you don't believe he'd be a good match then we'll definitely need suggestions."

Izuku looks at his mother with wide eyes. *But… the cost…*

The two women talk a bit more before Dr. Sui slips out of the room. Leaving them alone.

He realizes then that he'd underestimated Inko again. She had gone to unimaginable lengths to give him a good environment to grow up in a single parent household like theirs and she certainly wouldn't be giving up now. Therapy was a necessity, and she would not skimp on any costs in relation to it just as she hadn't when he'd asked for dojo lessons.

"Mom," he starts quietly, "I-I can quit the dojo…" The words are acid in his throat. "You're already having to work late a lot so w–"

Inko cuts him off. “I won't have you worrying about money, Midoriya Izuku,” she scolds.

His heart sinks further in his chest, shaking hands with the acid there. “But–”

“Your father may have run off, but he’s still legally obligated to pay child support.” She squeezes his hand. “As far as I’m concerned it's just as important for you to continue at that dojo as it is for you to start therapy. I haven’t touched any of the money that man's sent us in the last ten years out of pure stubbornness, but I’m not going to let something as petty as that keep you from getting the help that you need.

Izuku feels something in his chest clench painfully. He bites onto his lip, chin trembling as he pushes back tears. He looks down quickly, not daring to make eye contact with the woman.

“Surely you didn't think it would ever cross my mind to take away something so precious to you, honey.”

He squeezes her hand back without replying.

“You're allowed to be a little selfish. You're allowed to put yourself first when it comes to the things you really care about.” She gently guides him into an awkwardly positioned hug. “You're a kind boy,” she murmurs into his hair, “Always so willing to sacrifice the things you love for the convenience of others. But, you don't have to do that with me. You shouldn't have to do that for anyone.”

Izuku blames his unruly emotions on the hospital, blames it on the atmosphere of the psych ward. He can't seem to ever keep them in check here.

He's always crying these days.

He'd be lying if he said he hadn't been scared at his own suggestion. Even if he'd seemingly learned all that he could at the dojo, that place was still his second home. He didn't want to give it up. Rather than gaining anything from his vigilantism, it seems that lately he's only been losing things because of it. He didn’t want to lose anything else to it. *That’s why I—*

“Besides,” Inko murmurs with a soft laugh, breaking him out of his thoughts, “I doubt Chee-san would allow you to leave so easy.”

Izuku's eyes drift closed softly, relaxing in his mother's hold. Her chest hums gently as she talks, lulling him into a quiet place where all of his worries seem so very far.

That's why I have to kill Piper.

Shinsouhno ⟩

Today 10:39 am

vlad king is a horrible pe teacher i think im going to collapse

Glad I'm not there for it ✧

i swear he alm

…

Almost what

DID YOU GET CAUGHT TEXTING ME

SHINSOU NO AKSJFDSJF

[Video: A black screen is shown, a loud rustling noise breaks through the speaker before a deep, muffled voice cuts through, "–f you can find time to text during *PE* then you can find time to do two more laps around the gym bef–!"]

Midoriya smothers a laugh. His mother had taken her leave shortly before and the nurse that is checking his chart glances up at the boy, a smile on her face. "Something funny?" she teases.

Midoriya flushes. "My classmate got caught texting me in class."

"Oh? A friend of yours?"

He smiles back at her sheepishly. "Hopefully."

Izuku plays the video again, eyes sparkling with star dust. He listens to it over and over again, pressing the speaker to his ear with a dopey grin just so he can hear it better. But, eventually the dopamine begins to wear thin, he tries to listen to it again, tries to keep the smile on his

face. He tries so desperately to keep his thoughts from drifting to Reo.

In the end his efforts are futile.

Izuku hadn't heard from the teen since he'd last shown up in his hospital room muttering his last name like a curse.

Another text arrives from Shinsou, but he's nowhere near as lively as he had been before.

Why did it take his mother's tears to bring him back to reality? Why did it take Reo's cold fury for him to realize his mistakes? *Why do I hurt the people I love most?*

The nurse studies his falling smile carefully from the corner of her eye.

"People can't live without hurting others," the voice in his head informs him jovially, *"But you… you're special. You only ever hurt the people that care about you."*

The woman's eye twitches and she quickly turns to him, mouth opening as if to speak before she pauses. She looks pensive. "It's true that…" she starts carefully, "That people can't live without hurting others."

Midoriya's head snaps towards her, surprised and borderline fearful of the woman's words. His mind races, *a quirk?* He tenses, uncertain about just how much she can hear of his thoughts, but she doesn't show anymore signs that she can hear what he's thinking as she pushes on.

"It's part of life. There's no way to avoid it, you know? And the people we love most are often the ones who end up feeling that hurt the most," she explains. She's looking away from him now, face twisted up in a way that tells him she's uncertain about whether she should have said anything to him at all. "You're not alone in that. Even when we don't want to, even when we try not to. It's so easy to hurt the people who care about you, but that's *because* they care, you know? When you hurt they too will hurt. That's normal. And you're by no means the only person who struggles with it." The uncertainty on her face clears and she turns back to him, resolve hardening. She looks sure in herself now, but some of that certainty slips away when they lock eyes.

He doesn't know what she sees when she looks at him.

Does he look sad? Depressed? Suicidal?

He wonders if his eyes look close to weeping.

He doesn't know what expression he's wearing. He murmurs a barely there 'thank you' because while he doesn't know how to feel about what the woman had said, he can feel just how terribly those words mangle his heart. He can feel how they wage war against the voices in his head saying otherwise. The resolve slips back into her eyes, more apparent now than ever.

"My quirk lets me hear people's worst thoughts," she explains. "The darker they are the louder I hear them. When I first got my quirk I didn't realize what I was hearing. I assumed the thoughts I heard were the only one's people had. I thought the world was nothing but a corrupt and lonely place," the woman tells him quietly. She glances at the room's door, watching as someone passes down the hall. "It took me years to realize what my quirk actually was, and that the thoughts I'd been hearing didn't decide what kind of person someone was." She turns back to him. "The nicest people… They always seem to have some of the worst ones. That's why… yours… please don't listen to them."

Midoriya isn't sure how to respond to the woman's mini monologue. He's not sure she even expects him to, not with the way she glances at the door.

"I need to go check on another patient," she tells him softly. "But, please… don't forget what I said."

Izuku doesn't even know her name.

He thinks a lot about the woman's words, a bit of hope flaring every time a nurse comes to check on him. But she does not return. He doesn't even know what he'd say if he saw her again. That seems to be a recurring theme in his life recently, not knowing how to respond to people anymore.

He takes a walk around the hospital by himself to clear his mind. A few of the nurses give him wary looks and one tries to be stealthy about following him until peeling away when he reaches the courtyard he'd visited with his mother before.

It was hard to do anything when you were in a glass box like this.

He originally had plans of sitting on the bench they'd used last time, but instead finds a scarily familiar head of heterochromatic hair already occupying his spot. He feels his heart leap into his throat. He only needs to see the back of the boy's head to recognize him as none other than Endeavor's son donning one of UA's uniforms.

He curses under his breath, slipping behind a nearby tree to hide. There's nowhere to really hide in a glass courtyard like this one, but it keeps him out of sight of the boy.

Midoriya shakes himself out of it, peeking around the tree to check the boy's wrist for a hospital bracelet. He finds none.

He must be here to see someone else then.

Midoriya hasn't seen the boy since… Izuku tenses, shivering as he recalls the icy rapture of the USJ moments before he— *before he—*. Midoriya sucks in a deep breath, holding his side in phantom pain.

Thoughts like those would lead him nowhere good.

He peeks around the tree again. He doesn't want to leave just yet, he'd come here for a reason after all, and the Todoroki boy hadn't moved since Midoriya had come in… Really there was no reason for him to leave. He won't recognize him.

Izuku creeps around the tree quietly, taking a seat at the base of the trunk where he's able to watch the red and white haired teen. This was their third encounter with one another, though it was the first time he's seen him whilst dressed as a civilian. Midoriya doubts he would even appear on the boy's radar. Right now he's nothing more than another quirkless teen confined in a psych ward. There were plenty of kids like him locked up in places like these, suffering more than he's suffered, struggling more than he is, with uncaring doctors and nurses and parents.

Midoriya studies Todoroki carefully from his spot. The boy looks anxious in a way, like the last place he wants to be is here. Which, in hindsight, is understandable. Izuku doesn't know many people who would willingly *want* to be in this place.

To the untrained eye there's no blatant sign of the anxiety that Izuku senses. But, Midoriya has surely dealt with his own enough to be able to sense it in the in between moments. The older teen watches the koi

pond quietly, hands folded neatly in his lap. Izuku can't see the boy's face, but he can make a good assumption that its wrought with signs of deep thought.

"Shouto?"

Izuku startles at the name, glancing towards the entrance of the courtyard where the voice had come from. Snowy hair that's been streaked with red greets him. The young woman looks nothing like Endeavor, but it's obvious that she's related to the boy in some way, possibly one of his siblings. Todoroki Shouto turns to look at her before standing.

"Fuyumi."

Midoriya is easily overlooked by the woman, but as the two siblings meet in the middle Todoroki's eyes find him effortlessly.

Midoriya is quick to avert his gaze. Todoroki's heterochromatic eyes flicker towards the hospital band around his wrist and Izuku feels a sudden rush of discomfort. Embarrassment and shame mingle uneasily in his stomach.

He plucks at some of the grass beside him.

When the boy's eyes finally leave him he's able to breathe again.

He relaxes somewhat, leaning further back into the tree behind him, letting his eyes fall closed.

Midoriya was used to being ignored.

That's why he knew neither Todoroki nor his sister would look towards him again.

"You're here," Fuyumi says quietly, low, but just loud enough for Izuku to hear.

"Yes."

Midoriya doesn't dare open his eyes. Doing so would feel like an intrusion of some sort. He shouldn't be here. But, leaving would only draw more attention to himself.

"Are you…?" she starts tentatively.

"I don't know."

There's a heavy silence that hovers between them before Fuyumi speaks again, ever so softly, "She'd love to see you, Shouto."

Midoriya twitches uncomfortably in his spot.

There's another moment of silence between the two that tells Midoriya all he needs to know about what the other boy thinks about the words. It means he doesn't believe it.

He can feel heterochromatic eyes on him once again but he doesn't dare to even crack his own and catch the teen in the act.

"You don't have to see her if… if you— But you're here and…" she trails off quietly, the hope in her voice losing momentum, "and that's got to count for something, right? Come on," she says gently, almost begging, "Natsuo's here too. You can wait outside the room if you decide you really don't want to see her and then the three of us can all go eat together somewhere afterwards. There's a good soba place nearby, you know?"

The Todoroki boy doesn't say anything more, but Izuku can hear their footsteps start up, moving towards one of the exits. One set sounds more reluctant than the other.

Midoriya cracks his eyes open the moment he hears the door to the courtyard shut. The moment he confirms the two are actually gone he deflates, slouching in his spot with a sigh of relief. He looks up through tree leaves above him, clouds drifting through what small piece of the sky he can see.

April was starting to warm up, but it was still a little too cool in the shade for Izuku to be able to call it comfortable.

"He didn't recognize me, right?" Izuku murmurs as he pushes himself up from the ground, dusting his pants off. He glances towards where he'd heard the two disappear before shaking his head.

He fiddles with the hospital band around his wrist anxiously, not looking at it.

Suddenly feeling like a fraud for being here.

*"*Was *it really a lie though?"* the ghost of Reo's voice hisses in his ear. *"After what you did? "*

His memories of escaping from the USJ are hazy at best, but he

doesn't think he'd ever be able to forget the face Reo had made after seeing him in the woods. He'd hid it well given the scenario, but the fear in his eyes had been unmistakable.

" *...people can't live without hurting others.* "

Midoriya sighs tiredly, walking towards the small koi pond. He pauses in front of it, watching as a black koi swims along the surface.

It might be true, but… but I want to avoid it if at all possible, at least for him and mom and— He bites his lip. —and the list goes on for far longer than he had expected it to nowadays. Once upon a time it'd only been his mother.

He has more people to protect now.

The next day Midoriya wakes up with the sun, watching as it paints the sky in brilliant shades of red. The same nurse from yesterday comes to check on him, surprised to see that he's awake already.

He smiles at her, softly, sadly.

He's done a lot of thinking on account of her.

This is his last day of observation. As soon as Inko arrives he'll be leaving. If all goes to plan he will never see any of the people he's met here again, neither Dr. Sui or this unnamed nurse.

"Did you sleep well?"

He only hums in response from his spot by the window, watching as the sun slips through the breaks between towering buildings.

In the end the decision was an easy one.

After all, it's the same option that Bakugou had been trying to shove down his throat for the last eleven years.

How hard could it be to say yes to him for once?

Chapter End Notes

ASDKJFHADSJLKF ITS FINALLY DONE DONE DONE ITS OVER I KNOW ITS BEEN OVER A MONTH IM SORRY just a word of warning though I wouldnt expect any new chapters soon I've got

deadlines for a bunch of stuff at the end of november and finals at the start of december so kdsfhjaksdljf
Also!! I want to thank everyone for the birthday wishes! I know I didn't get to all of them I'm sorry T_T but i really appreciate them!
AND!!! I want to thank Tea, Vee, and Suz for helping me with the nurse scene that whole part probably would've been scrapped without them askjhfajslkfd

TW :// Pregnancy (tumblr explanation)

For those of you who follow me on tumblr you've probably seen a bunch of posts about me being pregnant I want to clarify that that was a joke that my friends an I started about the 'birth' of this chapter, I am not pregnant, I didn't realize anyone would actually believe me I apologize 🧢♀ I felt bad for all of the congratulatoryy messages T_T

Winter Solstice

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warnings :// mentions of suicide

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart!!!!

marie.fbm x

fretful-ferret x x x

extratiredofyourcrap

froggiestfroggy x

Thoughtfullightfriendstudent x

imfineanddandy

blackholeca x

In the end, the decision is an easy one.

After all, it's the same option that Bakugou has been trying to shove down his throat for the last eleven years.

How hard could it be to say yes to him for once?

Midoriya tries his best to keep his wandering thoughts in check as best he can while the nurse is around. He doesn't know what kind of thoughts might trigger her quirk, and he doesn't plan on staying long enough to find out.

His dead-eyed doctor comes in, giving the woman a curt nod as he passes. He doesn't even look at Izuku, just stares down at his clipboard, fiddling with the pages in a way that tells Midoriya he's purposely not looking in his direction. "Seems this is our last day together, Midoriya-kun. We'll be discharging you as soon as your guardian arrives to sign your paperwork and confirm that they've scheduled an appointment with a certified therapist."

Izuku nods stiffly. Despite his mother's best intentions, picking a

therapist with her was an awkward affair. Inko was distinctly ignoring price points and Midoriya couldn't keep himself from looking at them. After a few hours of deliberation they'd landed on someone close enough to UA for him to go after school when he needs and cheap enough for it to not constantly nag at the boy's conscience.

"After that, you'll be able to leave. I believe that Dr. Sui has already discussed when your next visit with Recovery Girl should be. But, she asked that I remind you to visit her once you return to school."

Izuku nods along silently, taking note of the man's bored expression. "Of course."

There's a quiet knock at the door behind them that draws their attention as someone peaks their head in. "Dr. Ogawa, they're calling for you in administration next time you're free."

The doctor looks back at the nurse. "I can head over now." He turns back to Midoriya briefly, offering a polite nod. "Take care of yourself, young man."

The two leave together, leaving only him and the nurse from before. His eyes find her kind ones and he smiles at her gently.

This will be the last time he sees her.

Inko comes in several hours later with a soft, yet sad smile. She drags him into a hug, holding him tightly to her chest. "You ready to go home?" She murmurs into his hair.

He rests his head on the woman's shoulder. "Yeah." The last two weeks have been the longest in his life. But, it wasn't over just yet. *Just a few more days. Just a few more and it'll all be over.*

Dr. Sui slips in behind her, smiling at them from the doorway. "If we meet again I pray it's under better circumstances."

Inko releases him and Izuku lets out a quiet chuckle. "I think that's something we can all agree on."

"Thank you for all your hard work, Dr. Sui," Inko says, sincerity spilling out, "I don't know what we would've done without you."

The doctor laughs softly, "He's a strong boy, Mrs. Midoriya. He would

have done just fine with or without me.”

Inko ruefully shakes her head, denying the statement without the need for words. “My gratitude isn’t any less.” She turns back to Izuku, squeezing his hand gently. “You’ve got all of your stuff right?”

Izuku nods silently before bowing to the doctor. “Thank you,” he murmurs solemnly.

His mother's hand runs a hand over his back in a soothing manner. “Let’s go home.”

19 · Trending in Japan

#PiperSupport

13k Tweets

Quackity @quackityHQ · 1h

If we can get **#PiperSupport** trending then I’ll gift 5 tier three subs in the offline chat

Ashy 🌙 @plutonisms · 2h

#PiperSupport LETS GOOOOO

Vee @vsversus · 1h

I still don’t know if they’re dead or alive, but I don’t need any prompting to help trend **#pipersupport**

Dippy @spinningpotatogang · 53m

#pipersupport ✊

🥒🥒🥒 @WormTree3 · 37m

#PiperSupport is just a bunch of leftist propaganda

Ebon @bingus · 2h

If you guys can trend j-pop idol names every other day then we can trend **#PiperSupport**

Missing Piper Hours :(@nabtime · 1h

I'm starting this hashtag to show Piper that we're still here supporting him no matter what! **#PiperSupport**

Ranboo @ranaltboo · 29m

Deserved 👏👏👏 **#PiperSupport**

🌱Emily🌱 @AllMightyyy

Yall cant be serious about this **#PiperSupport** trend lmaooo, just call yourself a villain sympathizer and move on

R @Wiiikip · now

#PiperSupport

The apartment feels *different*. But Midoriya can't exactly put a finger on what's changed. He slides his shoes off at the door, watching as his mother glides down the hall to the kitchen.

There's an air of disquiet that hangs over the household, permeating the in-between moments.

He slips down the hall quietly, pausing at the door to his room. He feels hesitant to open it, unsure as to why.

Inside is no different than how he left it. The bed's been made and his shelves straightened, but nothing else has been touched. Thankfully

there was no vigilante gear for the woman to accidentally find besides that of his bulletproof vest tucked beneath his bed.

Reo has what remains of Piper's gear.

He'll need to get all of it back.

He glances away from his closet, trying to occupy his mind with other things.

He'll need to talk to Reo again soon.

24 · Trending in Japan

Find Piper

10k Tweets

Chase 🖉 @AlwayReblogNeverPost · 2h

Okay but can someone please **find piper** the anxiety I feel rn is through the roof 🫠

愛藍 @cucknrun_ · 1h

Find Piper!!!!!!!!

MVN @mustafuvigilantenews · 1h

Twitter trends '**Find Piper**' in Japan in response to the prolonged absence of Musutafu vigilante, Pied Piper

RIP L'Man 🪖 @N1kiDidNthingWrong · 54m

normally i wouldn't agree with trending something like **find piper** but given the circumstances this is more of an emergency since the last we heard of piper was that he was severely injured

id rather him be caught than dead

Wren 📌 check pinned @wrenner · 38m

PLEASE WE'RE DESPERATE **FIND PIPER**!!!!

LxL @heroo_supremacy · 26m

follow me I draw ✧

'**find piper**'

🐻❄️❄️ (follow limit) @plutonandfrosty · 1h

Please help trend **find piper**, you might not think it does much, but it can help spread the word to the right people!!

fuck u im @alwaysright · 1h

find piper?? maybe u should check ur local graveyards 😂😂😂

‼️PINNED‼️ @vigilantebegood · 3m

⚠️WARNING⚠️

Please turn your autoplay off! user @/GoPiperrr56 and several others are spreading potentially triggering videos that are disguised as fan edits in the **find piper** trend

don't engage with them! block and report!

be careful and please take care of yourself!!!

It's been a long time since Midoriya has been able to sleep eight hours at a time. He spent a year waking up at odd hours of the night for patrols and in return for good efforts, his mind often saw fit to rouse itself at random times throughout the night.

He stares blearily at his All Might posters, barely visible in the

darkness, questioning why he's even awake all the while already knowing the answer. He shuts his eyes, blocking out what's visible of the hero's smile.

He would usually be in the middle of a patrol right now, slinking down alleys, apprehending criminals, *saving people.*

He tries to coax himself back to sleep to no avail. He rolls over, grunting at the pressure it puts on his side. His eyes reopen, staring blankly into the darkness until his vision adjusts and he's greeted with the sight of his closet. There's a painful ache that starts up in his chest thinking of the map of leads he has, or lack thereof, on Eri's whereabouts hidden inside.

He should send it all to the detective.

He pauses at the thought. *How would he react to Piper's death? How would Eraserhead? How would my supporters?*

No matter what scenario he comes up with in his head, no matter how painful his chest aches at their hurt, nothing compares to his mother's grief-stricken face.

His nightmare about Reo still haunts him as well. That phantom feeling of total loss rests quietly in his chest, pulsing in time with his heart.

His mother told him he was allowed to be a little selfish, but in truth, he's been more than a *little* selfish. Midoriya's righteous cause for vigilantism has never solely been about saving others. Heroism was his dream, a dream that had been ripped so viciously away from him. His heart, his *sun*, desired to save others. And in that desire lay hidden his desperation to prove himself. But he's done so at the cost of others

Izuku swings his legs over the side of his bed, pushing himself to his feet. He stands there quietly for a moment, debating with himself if this is really the only solution. And he knows, somewhere deep down, that there are other ways he could solve all of this. But this, *this* is the only way to ensure that Inko would never have to worry about him again.

He's memorized the number by now, and it's a good thing too considering his *other* phone is probably being stored with the rest of his gear. He dials the number, hesitating for only a moment before starting the call. The ringtone hums in his ear for a few tense moments before it's answered.

“Giran,” he says without preamble, “It’s Piper.”

There’s a beat of silence before the man lets out a long sigh. “Wow kid, I'm surprised to see that you survived.”

The boy grimaces, hand hovering unconsciously over his side. “I need to talk to you... in person,” he adds after a moment. “Can you meet tonight?” He glances towards his bedroom door, thoughts momentarily straying to his mother. “I’d need two or so hours to get over there.”

“I've got someone on the books that encrypts all of these phone calls, Piper. As long as there's no one to overhear the info on your end, then no one will ever have to know this conversation even took place.”

Midoriya hesitates at this.

Inko thinks he’d tried to kill himself. If she came to check on him even once while he was gone... She would think he was trying to do it again. She’d have the police on his trail within the hour.

“Then… I need you to do something for me,” the boy says softly.

“Unless this is time sensitive there’s something I’d like to bring up first,” Giran interrupts, clearly waiting for the Izuku’s okay before continuing. “My favor,” he says, chair creaking over the phone as he shifts. “I’d like to redeem it.”

Midoriya tenses, eyeing his bedroom door cautiously. *This was a mistake. I should've let Giran think I’d died like everyone else.*

“I call it a favor, but really it’s a preemptive measure to avoid any future conflicts of interest that may arise on my part,” the broker explains, “You see, I kinda like you kid, you’re good for business. I have the supply and you create the demand so I’d rather not see you become a red smear on the concrete if you get what I mean?”

Midoriya only grunts quietly in response. Uncertainty clear on his face.

“What I’m trying to say is that I need you to stay away from the League.”

The boy freezes, surprised by the request. “Who?”

“The League of Villains. The guys who did in the USJ. I need you to

stay away from them."

He swallows the bile in his throat. "That's it?" Izuku asks, carefully perching himself back on the edge of his bed.

"They have dangerous people behind the scenes, Piper. People that make Overhaul's little gang look like cranky preschoolers. It's for your own sake just as much as mine. Stay away from them."

Midoriya's jaw clenches, memories of the USJ resurfacing. Blood and pain and the thought of death. He swallows them back, lets them drown in the roiling ocean that's made its home in his stomach. He lets them drown there, he forces himself to let them drown because he can't let himself get involved again. This is the only way.

Izuku forces himself to relax. "I think what I called to ask you for will fulfill your favor then."

On the other end of the line the broker bears a thoughtful expression.

Midoriya takes a deep breath. He forces himself not to hesitate. "I need you to help me kill Piper."

There's a long period of silence where Izuku finds himself holding his breath, waiting for a response.

"So you've finally decided to get out?" Giran asks.

The boy lets out a quiet hum of agreement, sobering himself.

"I never thought I'd see it," Giran says, leaning back in his seat. "I don't guess you'll let me change my favor now?"

Midoriya chuckles mirthlessly. "'fraid not."

"Worth a try." The broker jokes. "So, how soon do you want all of this done?"

Izuku perches himself on the edge of his bed, hunching over his lap. The only light in his room comes from the phone pressed to his ear. "The longer this gets drawn out the less people there will be that believe it."

Giran hums thoughtfully. "Give me a day or two then. I'll see what I can do and we can talk payment then…. It's nice to know you're alive, kid."

“Nice to be alive,” Izuku murmurs somberly before clearing his throat, “And just one last thing. Remember what I asked you for that one time? Just before the Precepts raid?”

Giran taps absently at his lit cigar, thinking back. “The letters?”

The boy nods, leg bouncing nervously. “Yeah. I need you to deliver one.”

“Are you sure you're ready to go back?” Inko asks, fluttering around the boy.

Midoriya laughs quietly. “I'm sure. I think the normalcy will be good for me. Besides, I can see Recovery Girl again while I’m there.” He’s not even been out of the hospital for a full twenty-four hours yet. But, he'd come out of his room fully dressed for school before Inko had even finished waking up.

She studies him closely, watching the way the small fire in his eyes flickers desperately.

His mother straightens, emerald eyes laced with resolve. “If you're sure then. If you feel bad at any point in time you call or text me and I'll come pick you up. I don't care if it's physical or not; I'll come get you. Do you understand?”

Izuku smiles softly at the woman. “I will.”

“And Chee-san has explicit instructions to send you home if you show up at the dojo. You’re still recovering and I don’t want you pushing yourself until you’re healed.”

Midoriya clasps her hands between his. “I’ll take care of myself.” *You won’t have to worry about me much longer, I promise.*

Izuku doesn’t know what to expect when he shows up at the train station, but Reo’s absence makes it clear that he shouldn’t have expected any sort of normalcy. He’s not entirely surprised, but there’s still a pit of disappointment that curls in his chest when he finds himself unable to find his friend hidden among the crowd.

Reo was angry, but not in the usual sense. Izuku had crossed a line somewhere along the path to vigilantism. But the more he thought over the situation, the more he realized that the line he’d crossed was further back than he’d initially believed.

He'd passed that line long before he'd nearly died and it was clear that he'd simply been refusing to admit it.

"Was it really a lie though? It doesn't seem like a lie… Not because I believe you wanted to kill yourself, but because no matter your intentions you almost did."

Midoriya shifts uncomfortably in his spot on the train, his grip on the hand strap overhead tightening.

There's a low hum of noise on the train. A baby babbles softly to his right and a girl in the seat to his left whistles repeatedly, cursing under her breath. His eyes catch on the reflection of two UA uniforms behind him in the train's window and he finds himself tuning into the students' quiet conversation, staring absently ahead of him.

"-heard one of the kids in 1-A got pulled by their parents after that USJ incident."

"I'm not surprised. I'd be *asking* my parents to pull me if that happened to me. I mean UA's a good school, but there's lots of good schools out there."

"Yeah, but it's *UA*. You know what that can do for your résumé, right?"

Midoriya grimaces, trying his best now to drown out the rest of the discussion. He lets a combination of the rumbling of the train and the girl's whistling bury any of his more unfavorable thoughts.

UA is loud, not that it wasn't before, but Midoriya becomes all the more aware of it during his solitary walk through the halls. There's an oddness about it that takes him by surprise. He'd always been alone in middle school, so after only a few days at UA he feels surprised to admit that he nearly managed to forget that feeling.

He's surrounded on all sides by strangers, but that's how it's always been for him.

Three days. That's all it took Reo to overwrite those memories. And six seconds was all it took for his absence to drag them back.

1-C is a strangely unfamiliar place. In the two or so weeks since school has been in session he's only been here three times before today and yet he finds a strange comfort in being here again. In a class of twenty people no one pays his entry much mind. Even Shinsou doesn't look up as he enters, too busy squeezing in a few extra minutes of sleep, only raising his head when Midoriya pulls out his chair to sit.

The teen blinks at him tiredly before pulling himself up and leaning back in his seat.

Midoriya offers him a small smile and Shinsou pulls his lips into a lazy grin.

"Welcome back."

"Didn't miss me too much did you?" Izuku teases, clinging desperately to the sense of normalcy that he gets from being able to mess around with someone again.

"I was heartbroken without you here," Shinsou jokes.

Midoriya laughs softly as more students begin filling the room, taking their seats.

"Goooood Morning little listeners!"

Izuku flinches back at the noise, whipping his head around to the source as Shinsou grimaces, picking at one of his ears. Present Mic enters the room with as much subtlety as a crying toddler, which, is to say, very little. Midoriya has been able to recover from the USJ to a certain physical extent, but the emotional wounds still remain fresher than he's willing to admit. He's been removed from reminders of what happened and hasn't had to confront them since he landed himself in the hospital. Now, however, he's forced to confront them head-on.

He jerks his eyes away from the teacher, refusing to deal with whatever emotional trauma his appearance had dug up.

The man immediately takes note of Izuku's presence. Though thankfully he doesn't mention anything about it to the class and continues on with homeroom as usual.

Most of the day is somewhat of a blur. He spends his time getting caught up with what he missed and finally turning in the assignments

Shinsou had dropped off while he was still at the hospital. He's forced to sit out during P.E. by Vlad King, though he chats sporadically with Shinsou via text as he watches the lilac-haired teen from the bleachers, forcing himself to choke back a laugh when the boy nearly gets caught on his phone. At one point the hero glares up into the bleachers at Midoriya himself, obviously having caught on to what was happening despite having no evidence to prove it.

Izuku shrinks into himself the moment they lock eyes. They're dark red.

Midoriya's beginning to *hate* the color red.

Reo isn't in the cafeteria for lunch and Izuku learns from Shinsou that the teen hadn't been at their table all week. Shinsou, however, is a surprisingly good distraction from this fact. Part of him thinks the other boy is purposeful about his small talk and light-hearted jabs like he knows Midoriya needs the distraction.

There's a short succession of crackling explosions from Bakugou on the other side of the cafeteria near the end of lunch that has Izuku jerking violently in his seat. They take him back to the USJ, back to black mist and suffocating heat and burning hands melting through his hoodie, fussing with his skin, ki—

"Midoriya," Shinsou's voice drags him back. The boy taps at the table between them. "You're in the cafeteria. The bell's gonna ring soon, you need to finish eating."

It's not much, but it's enough to ground him back in reality. Maybe he should've taken a few more days off school.

He takes a moment to regather himself before picking his chopsticks back up from where he dropped them and shoveling another bite of food in his mouth.

"Have you given the sports festival anymore thought?"

The question grounds him further, gives him a much-needed distraction from the burning scar on his neck. "Not really," he admits, still somewhat distant. "There's not any reason for me not to compete though. You—" Izuku pauses thinking over his next words, "You said that winning the sports festival could get you into the hero course, right?"

“Yeah,” Shinsou mumbles around a mouthful of food, eyeing him carefully.

“And you’re certain about that?”

“It’s happened before.”

Midoriya gnaws gently at his bottom lip, staring down at his plate. “You know I originally applied for the hero course here. I was rejected if it wasn’t already obvious, didn’t even get to take the test.”

Izuku doesn't know why he's saying any of this, he especially doesn't know why he’s throwing all of it at Shinsou without warning. He refuses to make eye contact with the other teen, fists clenching in his lap. “Because of that I'd given up on everything for a while. Even when you’d first brought up the sports festival, I didn’t think it mattered. If I decide to take it seriously now, you won’t hold it against me, will you?”

“Why would I hold that against you?” Shinsou asks flatly.

Izuku glances up at him warily.

“I already said I wouldn’t mind the competition, didn’t I?”

Midoriya’s lips part with the intent to speak but all that comes out is a quiet laugh of disbelief. He lets his head fall, chuckling to himself. “That you did.”

Pied Piper would be dead soon.

Midoriya Izuku, however, didn’t have plans on dying.

“Guess I’ve only got three days then?” He looks up to find the other boy smirking at him.

“I promise I’ll still eat lunch with you when I get into the hero course,” Hitoshi teases monotonously. His eyes are tired but his grin is bright nonetheless.

Maybe, just maybe, he’ll choose to be optimistic about this for once. Midoriya smiles.

“Do you want me to sign a napkin for you? There’s no telling how much my signature will go for in a few years.”

He parts ways with Shinsou at the end of the school day, ducking into the hall when he catches Present Mic eyeing him for an opportunity to speak after class. He unfortunately can't leave school just yet, but he's had enough practice slipping away from someone to easily avoid a teacher only half-heartedly seeking him out.

He quickly asks one of the older looking students for directions before heading up a floor to Recovery Girl's office.

Izuku knocks gently at the door, only sliding it open when a voice from inside tells him to come in. The heroine sits at a desk off to the side, looking over papers. When she glances up at him she looks surprised.

"Midoriya. I didn't expect you to see you here so soon." She carefully slides off of her seat, hobbling towards him. "Did you go to class today? Or did you just drop in?"

A doleful expression crosses his face as he closes the door behind him. "I've been here all day."

She sighs. "You need to be careful not to overexert yourself. No one will blame you for taking another few days off. You're still recovering." She waves him over to a nearby seat, motioning for him to sit as she hefts herself onto a stool. "You should be fully healed after this, but if you find you're still experiencing any pain afterward don't be afraid to drop by again."

"It honestly doesn't hurt too much anymore. I doubt I would've even come to see you if you hadn't told me to," Midoriya chuckles.

She glowers at him over the brim of her visor but says nothing in response to the words. "You'll be a little tired after this but given we don't have too much more to heal, it shouldn't affect you like it has in the past. You might feel like taking a nap when you get home though."

"It's been a while since I've had a good nap." He offers her his hand which she takes gently in hers, pressing her lips to the back of it. He's still not used to the effect her quirk has. Tingles start up violently in his side, uncomfortable, but not painful in any way. The feeling persists for only a few moments before he feels a more mild form of exhaustion strike him. He blinks tiredly.

"Let's have one last look at it then."

Izuku shrugs off his blazer at the woman's words, slinging it over the back of his chair and lifting his shirt. Her fingers are cold against his skin as she works to peel the bandage from his side. She studies the freshly healed area with a thoughtful expression before glancing up at him.

"Would you like to see it?"

Midoriya's mouth opens as if to say something before he closes it again. *Do I want to see it?* he wonders, pondering the question. Whatever remnants remained in his skin would be there for the rest of his life. The scar, because of course there has to be a scar, would never fail to remind him of his failures, of his almost death.

Of his *trauma.*

He nods stiffly.

The woman spins on her stool, shifting through the drawer behind her and returning with a small handheld mirror that she offers him. "I'll get you some gummies for the road. They'll help wake you up a bit," she murmurs gently, patting his knee before she hops off the stool and crosses the room, leaving him alone for the moment.

His fingers clench around the handle, shifting it so he can see his face in the reflection. Even with how much bed rest he got while in the hospital he still looks exhausted. His dark circles though, for the first time in over a year, don't look as dark as they once were.

He takes a deep breath and angles the mirror towards his side.

He's not expecting to see three separate scars. Just as Dr. Sui had warned, the surgery had left him with a nasty reminder, they're worse than any of the others he's received in the past. The only one that might've been comparable having long since been erased.

He feels nauseous looking at them.

He can hear Recovery Girl making her way back across the room and lets go of his shirt, letting it fall back into place. He sets the mirror down on the counter, turning to face her. She offers him a handful of gummies with an unreadable expression.

Without the woman in front of him, Midoriya would have spent many long months recovering to get to the point he's at now. And he can see that knowledge reflected in the hero's eyes. She's scared for him,

scared that, because he's healed so quickly, he'll forget the consequences of what she thinks he's done.

He won't of course.

He doesn't think he could if he tried.

"I know the consequences," he tells her softly, solemnly, "I won't forget them."

That's all she needs to hear.

He pops the gummies into his mouth, grimacing at the strange mix of flavors as he pulls his blazer back on. There's no pain in his side, no achy muscles. There's only scars now, scars and memories.

"Thank you for your help."

"Take care of yourself, young man."

Izuku bows before heading towards the door, sliding it open. He blinks at the person standing on the other side of the door, waiting for the apparition to disappear. Because it's surely some sort of hallucination.

It doesn't.

The color drains from his face, freckles stark against his skin.

Eraserhead stands before him, mummified but standing.

Alive.

Aizawa catches his gaze and Midoriya's mind roars with static. He has to rip himself out of his thoughts just to look away and ripping himself out of it is like trying to fight the pull of gravity. He blinks again, trying to clear his eyes as they water up. It's been two weeks since Izuku had to carry the man out of the USJ. And the nightmares he's had over the last two weeks were more vivid than even the memories Midoriya had of the incident itself.

His scars *burn.*

He feels Recovery Girl come up behind him. "You're late."

Izuku steps to the side, allowing the man to pass before he finally slips out the door, looking as if he'd seen a ghost. As tired as he is he

doesn't waste any time disappearing down the hall as quickly as he can.

Aizawa lies on one of the nearby beds, dosing after another round of healing from Recovery Girl as she explains Midoriya's situation to the boy's homeroom teacher.

"Surgery?" Yamada's eyes are wide as he leans back into his seat.

"The only reason I'm telling you this is because I was informed that you were already aware of what happened. You're also the teacher that's around him the most. It's important for you to be aware of the extent of his medical issues in order to keep an eye on him. The others will of course be notified that he was in the hospital, but for privacy sake the reason why will be withheld."

"I know what happened," The man sighs, "But, I wasn't aware of the details or that he had to have surgery because of it." He runs a hand over his face, glancing at Shouta.

"Given the reports I've seen and the conversations I've had with him I doubt he's likely to try again, but I still think it's important to keep an eye on him, especially with him being quirkless. Even with UA's policies, he's at a higher risk of being bullied."

"Quikless," Aizawa mumbles, half asleep, "What if he's quirkless."

"Go back to sleep Shouta," Hizashi whispers.

He does.

Midoriya makes his way out of the buildings as quickly as he can. He needs something to do, needs to get out of his head.

He needs to kill Piper.

Izuku dials Giran's number again, heart in his throat, fire in his neck, blood on the backs of his eyelids.

"You sent that letter right?" Izuku asks as soon as the call goes through, slipping past what few people litter the sidewalk.

"Piper?"

Midoriya only grunts in response.

“I sent it with all the updated documents that you sent over.”

The boy glances to the side nervously. “You didn’t read anything did you?”

“Despite my job description, I know how to respect a client’s privacy.”

Izuku’s shoulders relax in the slightest.

There’s no going back from here.

There's a cold feeling that settles in Naomasa’s chest like the steel core of a long-dead star.

He tries to remember the last time he saw Piper, tries to remember what kind of interaction it had been. Had it ended on a positive note? A negative one? He can't remember.

His hands shake.

He can't remember.

Chapter Art!!!

blackholeca x

Chapter End Notes

I HAVEN'T POSTED IN SO LONG, LITERALLY NOT SINCE OCTOBER ASDFJASDFKADLSKFJ BUT IM NOT DEAD, I GRADUATED COLLEGE, FELL INTO A LACK OF MOTIVATION HOLE AND NOW I AM HERE, I AM ALIVE, I AM LOVING LIFE TUMBLR HAS BEEN WILD, LIFE HAS BEEN WILD, I GOT MY MAIN TWITTER ACCOUNT SUSPENDED AND I HAD A FEVER ALL DAY TODAY BUT I FINALLY FINISHED THE CHAPTER AND TODAY IS A GOOD DAY
I HOPE YOU'VE ALL BEEN DOING WELL I MISSED YOU ALL AND I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS CHAPTER, IT TOOK A LONG TIME ASDFKHASKDFJADSF

THERE ARE BIG THINGS COMING, THE SPORTS FESTIVAL ARC IS COMING UP AND I CAN'T WAIT TO SHARE IT WITH YOU ALL

I LOVE YOU ALL
UNTIL NEXT TIME!!

edit: I ALSO FORGOT TO MENTION THAT I OPENED A REDBUBBLE (blackholeca) THE DIRECT LINK IS ON MY TUMBLR IF YOU WANNA CHECK IT OUT RHKSGSMSBSND

Red Nova

Chapter Notes

TW :// mentions of death , brief mentions of suicide

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart!!!!!

unknown-user10

tear-arts

Jackalspine

Plutoisgay

roundtheworld x x

jdot-fightme

Ferret x x x x x

“Despite my job description, I know how to respect a client’s privacy,” Giran says.

Izuku’s shoulders relax in the slightest.

There’s no going back from here.

“Ah, but before you go,” the broker adds, “I’ve got a meeting scheduled for us tonight.”

“A meeting?” Izuku glances around him nervously, doing his best not to accidentally bump into anyone as he makes his way home.

“I’ve found someone to help with your ‘death’. If you want people to believe this then what better way to make it believable than a corpse in your clothes,” Giran chuckles.

Izuku scowls, slipping down an alley for a short moment of privacy. “I don't want anyone to so much as question the validity of my death, but not if it means you ‘conveniently’ finding a body,” the boy hisses into his speaker.

“Don’t worry, it’s nothing you wouldn’t approve of,” he answers, waving off Midoriya’s concern. “I’ll explain it more when I see you tonight. This guy owes me a favor too so he’ll be doing the work at a discounted price.”

“Is he trustworthy?”

“He’s a neutral party,” Giran offers instead, “And that’s about as good as you can get in our business.”

“Somehow that doesn’t inspire confidence within me.”

“I’ll put it this way. If he cared about the people who came to him for business, then he wouldn’t have any. He doesn’t care about your vigilante persona.”

Izuku scuffs his feet against the concrete, sighing. “I guess I can only take your word for it.”

“Would I lie to you?” the man drawls, smile twitching at his lips.

“Absolutely.”

Giran laughs at that.

“But, at the very least,” Izuku offers, “I doubt you’d lie about this. So what time’s this meeting?”

There's a cold feeling that settles in Naomasa’s chest like the steel core of a long-dead star.

He tries to remember the last time he saw Piper, tries to remember what kind of interaction it had been. Had it ended on a positive note? A negative one? He can't remember.

His hands shake.

He can’t remember.

His eyes trail over the letter again and again, seeing, but not quite taking it in. He feels numb. He feels like fire. He feels like folding in on himself.

Dear Detective Tsukauchi,

If you're reading this then it's been two weeks since I've last been in touch with the person that delivered this to you. You are unlikely to have received this otherwise. In this case scenario, it seems the worst may have finally happened to me. I've cheated death one too many times in the past year so really I can't be surprised. Whatever did me in I'm certain I won't regret it, I never have. I've got to say sorry for worrying you so much though. I'm sure I aged you a couple of years with all my antics. Sorry about that. You're a good man, Detective. I can tell you cared about what happened to me beyond just getting me behind bars. You were one of the first adults to do so, even if we were on opposing sides. I remember I once asked you what the harm was in saving people that no one else would and you told me that's what you were trying to do as well. And no matter how misplaced I thought your efforts were at the time I just want to thank you for working so hard for my sake.

Along with this letter I've attached all of my most recent research into the Eight Precepts as well as a few other criminals and illegal organizations that have crossed my radar within the last year. Depending on when this letter is sent the information could be useless by now, but it's everything I know. I'm not sure how helpful any of it will be, but I'm happy to leave it in your hands. I trust that you'll get all of it to the right people. I'll be the first to admit that there were a lot of things I never got to do with my life. And if you're reading this letter under the circumstances that I assume you will be, then saving that girl will unfortunately remain one of them. In this case I can only ask that you take care of her in my stead.

Heroism was always something that I strived desperately for, but a legal career path was impossible for someone like me. That's why I turned to vigilantism. That's why I became Piper. I wanted to help people, and I did. My legacy lives on in the people I've saved, Detective. I want you to catch the dirty bastard(s) that did me in just as much as the next person, but I'd rather you use your time saving others. I can only ask that you continue protecting people in my stead.

Sincerely, Your Local Vigilante, Pied Piper

Naomasa feels many things. He feels like *doing* many things.

The paper crinkles beneath his clenched fingers. As of now, he's the only one that knows.

Naomasa Tsukauchi is the only one that knows that Musutafu's most infamous vigilante, Pied Piper, is dead.

Inko gets takeout for dinner and they both eat on the couch, talking intermittently over an All Might documentary about how school was and his newfound friendship with Shinsou. Inko smiles at him softly. Pain and trauma and worry for what's to come forgotten momentarily in favor of talking about the ordinary things in life.

For once he acts like a normal kid because he *is* a normal kid. Piper is on the verge of death, depending on how tonight's meeting with Giran goes, the vigilante could be dead come morning.

His grin widens as he watches All Might slam a villain into the pavement, the road cracking beneath the impact. He just barely manages to suppress a cheer. Inko pulls him into an excited side hug as All Might's blinding grin takes up the screen.

Izuku sees golden medallions in that smile, he sees the sports festival podium, he sees Aizawa approaching him with an offer to 1-A.

He sees Bakugou's seething cherry eyes and cracking palms. He sees fire, smells smoke, feels a burning heat biting into the nape of his neck. His smile falters, slipping into a grimace.

"After nearly two decades in the spotlight of hero society, All Might shows no sign of slowing down, and his retirement seems implausible to onlookers—"

His chest feels uncomfortable tight and he wants nothing more than to slide his way out from Inko's loving hug. Instead, he bites harshly into his lower lip, doing his best to keep from squirming and trying his best to focus back on the documentary. He tries to force himself back into the first fantasy, phantom hands desperately grasping for gold, for All Might's outstretched hand. The hero's voice is distorted, *"I have great respect for underground heroes like yourself!"*

Midoriya pinches his eyes closed, doing his best to focus the moment.

"I am here!" echoes heartily through the tv speakers.

The image in his head only continues to waver.

It takes all Izuku has in him to slog through the short essay for Midnight's class and every practice equation he solves for math leaves him with answers different than those in the book. It's frustrating and hard to focus on anything because he's distracted by his thoughts and his meeting with Giran tonight and his need to explain everything to Reo before he talks with the broker again. His leg bounces nervously, glancing towards the new picture frame on his desk. His mother had given it to him after dinner, a present for his recovery. It's a photo of Reo and him during their last dual family dinner.

It's meant to be something that brings him happy memories, but as of now Reo's bright smile only serves to set him on edge.

What if he hates me now? Can I handle that?

He thumps his head into his desk in defeat. He can ask Shinsou for help with the math tomorrow, for now all he wants to do is sleep.

"How do we know the letter is actually from Piper anyway?"

"That letter talked about something only he and I would know, there's no way it's not him. But, I'm starting to wonder if it's possible that all of this is just poor timing," Naomasa states, pacing, "He might've just forgotten to get into contact with this person, or—or been unable to reach whoever delivered this before it got sent to me."

"Tsukauchi-san," Detective Nakajima cuts in sternly, leaning back against the edge of the meeting table, "be realistic here."

It's late, later than any of them would like to be in the office, but it's the earliest that Naomasa was able to gather the people he needed. They've been bickering back and forth about where to go from here for well over an hour and everyone is starting to get fed up with one another.

"He's not dead until we get a body," Naomasa snarls.

"There may not be a body to *recover,"* Nakajima growls back, "You're not fit to handle Piper's case, you haven't been for months now. You're too close, too *invested.* We're police officers," he states harshly, "The government doesn't pay us to be optimistic and they certainly don't pay us to be surrogate parents for teens that can't follow the rules."

Naomasa rounds on the man, curses on his tongue, fire in his eyes, ready to risk demotion for the honor of a kid whose name he doesn't even know. *He's not dead. He can't be dead.* Instead of Nakajima's aging face, however, he's met with Sansa's soft eyes and flaxen fur standing in the way, blocking the other from sight.

A kind hand settles on his chest, stalling his momentum, extinguishing the flaming crater in his chest that'd been left in the wake of that damnable letter. "Go home," Tamakawa tells him gently. With the fire put out the cold is quick to seep in, settling in its place. "Go home, Nao" the feline repeats, quieter this time.

He feels as if the fight's been sapped from within him.

Sansa turns to the rest of those gathered in the room. "That'll be it for tonight. Thank you for your time, we'll pick this back up tomorrow after everyone's slept."

Izuku wakes like clockwork, his body has yet to forget its vigilante roots and it rouses him for his usual patrol hours without the need for an alarm. He takes extra precaution preparing for tonight's outing, slipping a pillow into a hoodie from his closet and laying it carefully beneath his comforter. He fashions a t-shirt into a head and an extra blanket into legs. He can't risk getting caught by Inko.

He stuffs what remains of his vigilante gear into a duffle bag and throws on a dark hoodie and sweatpants before catching his reflection in the mirror, staring at the barebones version of what used to be his vigilante persona. His eyes are colorless in the darkness, but he slips in a set of blue contacts just to be safe.

On his way out he grabs a medical mask. He feels awkward sneaking out without his usual gear, he feels naked, unprepared. The only thing that's in his bag is his vest and even that will do him no good if he's not wearing it.

In all technicality he's not even supposed to meet Giran for another two hours, but he's got somewhere to drop by before then. He grimaces as he slides the balcony door open and close, dropping the bag down and crawling over the edge, making his way to the ground.

Even after making a full recovery, Izuku can tell his body isn't the same anymore. He'd jogged most of the way here and already he can

tell he's out of breath. Midoriya raps gently against Reo's window, trying to manage his breathing.

He wonders if the boy will even open it.

He doesn't.

Izuku sighs shakily, taking a careful seat on one of the fire escape steps.

Reowo 〉

Today 1:23 am

we need to talk

Today 1:29 am

Reo please it's kind of cold out here

it's important

Today 1:40 am

Reo

please

He drops his phone in his lap, puffing warm air between his palms as he stares absently down the alley. He doubts the boy will respond now. For all he knows he could very well already be asleep given Midoriya hasn't been here to keep him awake at all hours of the night.

But a light flickers on in Reo's window, catching his attention. Midoriya watches it expectantly. He has to hold himself back from jumping up the moment the curtains part to reveal Reo unlatching the window locks. He pulls it open silently. He doesn't so much as look at Izuku.

Izuku rises carefully, stuffing his phone back in his pocket. He shuffles

his shoes off, leaving them on the stairs by his duffle bag as he slips inside.

Reo takes a seat in his usual spot at his desk. He looks pointedly at the wall.

Izuku carefully picks his way towards the bed, sitting hesitantly. He too shies away from looking at the other, offering only fleeting glances that send his nerves skyrocketing.

He'd come with a plan of what to say. He spent the entire walk here running through his internal script and brainstorming responses to every one of Reo's possible reactions. Unfortunately, all of that planning goes straight out the window as soon as he finds himself in his friend's presence.

Neither of them say anything.

The older teen is obviously waiting for him to speak even if he's refusing to so much as look at him. Izuku however, can't remember any of the things he planned to say.

He can't even manage an 'I'm sorry'.

The silent tension builds quickly and without mercy. Despite how chilled he'd gotten outside Izuku can already feel a nervous sweat beading beneath his bangs.

Eventually, Reo lets out a deep, *tired* sigh. The sound startles the already on edge Izuku whose eyes whip up on instinct.

When Reo finally looks at him takes immediate notice of Izuku's *blue* eyes.

"You got new ones?"

Midoriya fiddles with his nails, quickly looking away again. "They're not new. And they're not for what you think," he murmurs softly.

"What I think they're for?" Reo deadpans.

Izuku nods jerkily.

Reo's lips pull into a thin line. "You know," he starts, "I held you tight the first time you crawled through my window, incessant that you'd died at the hands of a villain," he says quietly. "I wasn't angry then. I was *worried.* I'm *always* worried about you. Every time you slip out my

window there's this small part of me that wonders if that'll be the last time." He takes in a shaky breath, steadying himself. "When my father left my uncle moved in with us for a while. He wasn't a detective yet, it was a dangerous job and I was just a kid with a quirk that let me remember every bad thing I'd ever read. Every time he left for work I'd have that same feeling of dread that I have now. *'What if this is it?'* It scared my mother to death how much I'd cry when he'd leave for work." The teen looks away carefully, absently studying a shelf of half-finished projects. "I had to learn how to deal with it. It was his job after all and he was an adult, he was *saving people.* But… I can't learn how to deal with this, not now. Not with *you.* I'm angry. I'm angry and I'm worried. I'm angry because you almost died from something that could've been prevented and I'm worried because I'm so scared that you'll just do it all over again." Reo's ochre eyes bore into his, they're desperate, pleading, *angry.* "You're my best friend and I love you, *but–"*

Izuku shifts uncomfortably, sinking into himself.

"I can't—" Reo chokes out, voice cracking. "I can't just ignore it or learn to deal with your reckless self-endangerment. *Your life matters too!* What part of that is so difficult for you to understand? Is it so hard to think that people care about you?! That *I* care about you?! What about *me?* What happens to me if you die! I can't—!" he shouts, clutching at his shirt. His voice drops to a whisper, fingers unfurling from the fabric, "I can't..."

He doesn't say anything more. He doesn't need to.

Izuku can finish the sentence on his own. He's known, secretly, that he was hurting Reo. He can't count the number of times he's crawled through this same window, littered with open wounds and old scars that Reo has detailed maps of imprinted in his head.

Reo has always been his sole confidant.

Every problem he's ever had has gone directly on his shoulders. But who was Reo's confidant? Izuku can't remember the last time his friend had come to him with any concern of his past the usual highschool drudgery. It makes sense if only because all of the boy's recent issues have stemmed from Izuku's vigilante persona.

All of the built-up hurt that he rarely got to see was coming out and Izuku, once again, was the cause of it.

Izuku's knee bounces with anxiety. He takes a deep, steadying breath.

No more.

He stares down at his clasped hands helplessly.

Never again.

“Piper's dead.”

Reo stares at him for a long time without saying anything and Izuku doesn't dare speak and disturb him. He doesn’t dare to even look the boy in the eyes.

“What.”

“At least he will be soon,” Izuku explains, holding himself back from fidgeting. “I-I talked with Giran, everything’s in the process of being set up,” he murmurs.

“You’re… you’re done?” Midoriya can hear the skeptical hope in the boy’s voice.

He nods jerkily, knot in his throat. “Yes,” he croaks quietly. “You were right… This whole time. I was just too blinded by finally being able to do something for people that I got ahead of myself. I've been looked down on my whole life, you know?” He huffs out a weak laugh. “Quirkless, useless, weak, they were all synonyms for my name. You were the first person that… that didn't care about that, the first person who didn't judge me for what I lack,” he says hoarsely. “The people at the dojo don't know, Chee Sensei being the only exception. I was just so happy,” he chokes out, “I was so *excited* to prove everyone wrong. But, there's no point in being right if I'm dead,” he states weakly. “I told everyone that I tried to kill myself, but like you said it wasn't too far off from the truth. And aside from that I pushed everything onto you without asking and you hardly ever complained and I took that as an answer without understanding the implications. I was always able to talk to you about everything, *anything. But you never said a word."* His voice cracks painfully. *"And I never even noticed."*

Reo remains silent, fists clenched in his lap.

“I've done all I can,” Izuku murmurs, staring defeatedly at his hands. “I can’t save anyone else. I’ve… I’ve accepted that now.”

Reo curses. “That’s not—” the teen sighs heavily. “I don’t want you to give up on your dreams. I want you to *take care of yourself.* I want you to stop– *stop sacrificing your well-being for those dreams.* You can still

save people, you're *good* at saving people," Reo insists and Izuku looks up hesitantly. "But, vigilantism can't be the answer anymore." He runs a hand over his face, a shaking sigh escaping him.

Izuku looks down again quickly, blinking back his blurring vision. He takes in a breath and holds it for as long as he can stand in an attempt to compose himself. "I know." He folds into himself gently. "I know."

Reo rolls his chair towards the bed, pulling the boy into a hug that shatters his remaining composure.

Izuku hiccups into the other boy's shoulder as he clings to him. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

"Dumbass," Reo murmurs into his hair. "You could've started with that."

They must stay like that for what must be a good half an hour before Izuku thinks to check the time. He spent longer than he'd imagined waiting for Reo to let him in. He'll likely be late if he doesn't leave soon.

"What is it?" Reo asks warily.

Izuku shifts uncomfortably, sniveling as he wipes the snot out from under his nose. "I'm supposed to be meeting with Giran soon. He said we'll be going over some of the final details tonight." His eyes are probably puffy, but he knows once he splashes some cold water on his face the swelling will go down.

Reo scrutinizes him. "What exactly are you planning to do? You're not going to stage a fight are you?" He says darkly.

Izuku shakes his head. "Nothing like that." *I hope.* "We haven't gotten to talk about it too much just yet, but he knows what I will and won't do." He glances at the door. "Can I use your bathroom?"

Reo nods silently and by the time Izuku comes back he looks considerably better.

The older teen looks up as he re-enters the room. "Are you leaving then?"

Izuku nods grimly.

"Be safe."

No more.

Never again.

“I will,” Izuku murmurs, and he means it this time. Midoriya pauses, remembering something just before he’s able to slip out the window. “Also,” he starts reluctantly, worried the other will flat out refuse him, “I’m going to need the rest of my gear.”

“Kettome,” there’s an obvious smile in Giran’s voice when the name crackles through the speaker.

Midoriya pauses mid-stride, visibly confused. “Kettome?” he asks into the phone, “You realize who you’re talking with, right?”

“Of course, kid,” the broker says breezily. “But, I thought you’d be more comfortable with a fake name during our little meeting.”

“I thought you said this guy was trustworthy. Why would I need a fake name?”

“I said he was a neutral party,” Giran clarifies, “Two very different things. There’s no reason to give him any unnecessary information.”

“So you decided giving me a name that means duel eyes would help alleviate that?”

“Yes.”

"That’s not even the right dual,” Izuku emphasizes.

“Well, I couldn’t make it too obvious now could I?”

Izuku lets out a long-suffering sigh as he approaches the building he’s to meet Giran outside of. He spies the man leaning against the wall and hangs up before the broker can say anything else, approaching from his blind spot. “Couldn’t you have used some stupidly common name like Satō or Suzuki?” Izuku calls out to him. “Literally anything other than Kettome would’ve been fine. ”

Giran turns towards him, a grin lighting up his face. “Where's the fun in that?”

The broker catches a glimpse of his blue eyes beneath the street lamp. “You seemed opposed to a new name, but not a new disguise?” Giran

asks, raising a brow.

“There’s no reason to give him any unnecessary information,” Midoriya retorts, repeating the man’s words from earlier.

Giran chuckles, shaking his head. “With his quirk it unfortunately won’t do much. He’s your best option to getting away with this, but the drawback is that he’ll know your face by the end of it.”

Izuku tenses, eyes narrowing. “You didn't mention that part over the phone.”

The broker quickly checks the time, deciding he still has time to explain before they go in. “I mentioned earlier that a body is the best way to make your death believable. Well, he calls his quirk De-Animation, it’s unique, makes him a valuable contact. It lets him make clones of other people, the clones, however, aren’t actually alive. They’ll hold up and decay just like any other body though.”

“Then he’ll know my face.”

“That’s correct.”

“And if he needs my DNA in order to activate his quirk then the police will also get a hold of my DNA when they recover the body.”

“Those are the drawbacks,” Giran confirms rather grimly.

Midoriya sighs, pinching at the bridge of his nose. “You’re lucky the police don’t have my civilian DNA.”

“Even if they do get it at some point, there’s not many reasons for them to both take your DNA *and* run it against that of a corpse,” the broker adds.

Izuku nods curtly as Giran checks his watch again.

“Since you seem to agree with it let’s head in.”

“Shimeka,” Giran says with a cheeky grin, looking back at the boy, “Meet Kettome.”

Midoriya resists the urge to sigh at the name.

From what Giran had told the boy of his quirk, the man’s name seems

to fit well. *Death maker,* Izuku thinks briefly. However, Shimeka's appearance isn't as death-like as his name implies. He's got the height that Midoriya imagined, but he's far from being stick thin. He's relatively heavy-set, fingers thick, cheeks thoroughly filled out. His hair is messy, hanging well past his shoulders in a ponytail that's long since started falling out.

Shimeka looks tiredly down at Izuku through wire-frame glasses before turning his attention back towards Giran. "You rarely attend these meetings yourself," he rumbles.

The broker shrugs. "He's a special case."

Shimeka only nods, obviously not having expected a straight answer from the man in the first place. "Either way, starting as soon as possible would be preferable. I've got another client due in six days and I'd like as much time to recover from this as possible." The man looks back at Izuku, studying him. "Given your size, it shouldn't take as long as I anticipated, a few hours at most. We can discuss the details during that time if you don't mind sticking around that long. But, to start I'll need a strand of your hair."

"I can meet you there if you want me to. I-I don't have to go in, but I can be just outside if you need me!"

Coming home after school hadn't been necessary, but he had time to kill before he was supposed to be at his first therapy session, and lurking around town felt strange without any gear.

Midoriya gnaws at his lip. Inko looks so expectant, so hopeful. He would rather not have her go if he's being honest. He's never been to therapy, has never known anyone that's been to therapy and as foreign as the concept is and as nervous as it makes him he wants to be alone for it. *'Therapy'* feels like a dirty word to him, even though he knows it's not. It feels like something private that he's not supposed to share with anyone else. In his head, it's something too taboo to even speak about and his fight against this falsity is a losing one.

No matter how much his mind retaliates against the idea, he can't deny his expectant mother. She wasn't trying to force her way into his head, merely offering him moral support and a companion on the way home. She was respecting his boundaries whilst still trying to play an active part in his recovery.

He nods at her hesitantly.

The therapist's office is closer to UA than he thought it'd be. It's a small building nestled between a coffee shop and a music store. He must've passed it before without ever even realizing.

There's a pastel blue and white awning that shelters the door from the rain and a sign that reads, *LC Counseling Center,* hanging from the front. He stares at the name as they approach, wondering what it could stand for. Inko gently squeezes his hand before pulling the door open.

The inside is about what he expected. There's a receptionist desk right when they walk in and a small waiting area off to the side with a few chairs and a couch. Inko gives his hand one last squeeze before letting go and walking toward the front desk where a woman waits for them with a smile.

"Are you here for an appointment?"

Midoriya had done well at denying the inevitable, but now that he's actually here he can feel nerves humming in his chest. He shifts anxiously from foot to foot as the two women talk amiably with one another. It takes his mother tapping him gently on the shoulder for him to realize the woman at the desk has stood and is waiting to lead him to the back.

Inko watches him worriedly. "It'll be okay."

He barely manages a nod.

He follows the woman down a narrow hall and up a short flight of stairs, stopping at the second door they pass. When she knocks softly there's a gentle, "come in" that floats through the door. The woman smiles at him reassuringly. "He's just inside. He's a very nice man so there's no need to worry."

She opens the door and gestures him inside. He takes a hesitant step forward, watching from the corner of his eye as the woman shuts the door behind him.

Although the room is bigger than he was expecting, and a window on the back wall lets in a lot of afternoon light. There's a desk off to the side, but Midoriya finds his new therapist perched in an armchair positioned in front of a light-colored couch.

The man’s hair is cloud-like, pulled back into an unruly ponytail with bangs that frame his face and white stubble that decorates the base of his chin. His left eye is a pale blue-lilac, his right, however, is as cloudy as his hair. Three long scars mar the area above the right one, cutting through his brow and reaching up into his hairline.

“Midoriya, right?” The man smiles at him softly and it immediately instills an odd sense of relief in the boy as he moves towards the couch. He offers Izuku his hand over the small coffee table positioned between them. “My name’s Shirakumo Oboro. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Chapter End Notes

WOOOOOOO
THAT WAS A HELLA BIG CHAPTER IM GLAD ITS OVER ASDKFJHASKJDF
If any of you know who Oboro is then you might be a little confused, don't worry, cannon is dead □□□ if you don't know then don't worry □□
Anyways thank you for all of your support!! I know updates have been sporadic and will probably continue to be so but please know that I have no plans on dropping this!!!
Now I've spent too long on working on this chapter so please enjoy!! I love you all! Thank you for sticking around! I hope you're ready for the sports festival!!
Until next time!

Pulsar

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart:

fretful-ferret x x x

sound. *What do I want?* He thinks to himself.

Izuku wants a lot of things of course. He wants to be able to give up on his dreams, but he also doesn't. He wants to save people. He wants to keep his relationship with Reo in good standing. He wants to stop worrying his mom. He wants to make more friends. He wants to get closer with Shinsou. He wants to get into the hero course. He wants to stay away from Bakugou. He wants to be recognized as something other than powerless. He wants to find Eri.

He wants to live.

"Are you happy, Midoriya?"

He contemplates the question for a long moment. "Not yet."

Vigilantism, for all it's worth, has never truly offered him happiness. Saving people gave him a sense of self-worth and fulfillment and those feelings, in turn, brought him the happiness he'd been so intoxicated by.

With only two words the boy is able to convey that, while he wasn't where he needed to be, he was both open and ready to do what needed to be done to get there. Shirakumo smiles at him. "Can I assume that's one of the things you're here for then? So that you can get the help you need to be able to get to a place where you *can* be happy?"

Izuku nods. "Yeah."

It feels like an obvious answer to him. Isn't that what everyone's goal in coming to therapy is after all? Isn't happiness always the end game? The verbal communication of this idea, however, feels like a form of affirmation that everything will turn out just fine.

"How long do you think it's been since you started feeling this way?" Oboro asks softly.

Izuku meets his eyes momentarily, gaze traveling up to trace the scars cutting through the man's brow. "...It's been a long time," Izuku murmurs, "I thought it'd gone away in the last year or so, but I'm starting to think it never really did." Midoriya fights off the headache he can feel starting behind his eyes. "It wasn't always this bad, but I'm sure I must have felt something similar to what's happening now since I was a kid."

To the man's credit, Izuku receives no indication of surprise. "Is there any specific incident you might be able to cite as a cause for these feelings, whether this is something that happened in the past or the reason you felt like they were going away and why they came back?"

"I can come up with a few reasons," Izuku mutters.

There's a short stretch of silence. "Would you like to share them? You don't have to feel pressured to respond right now if you don't think you're ready to go into detail. It's always something that we can revisit another time."

Izuku bites at his tongue, warring with himself for a moment before deciding this was a conversation he'd rather save for later. "I'd rather wait." He glances out the window nervously, watching as a bird darts by.

Oboro nods, jotting something down. "That's perfectly fine, we don't have to get into specifics. Up until now how do you think you've been coping with what you're feeling?"

Izuku stares out the window for a moment, perplexed. "I try not to think about it I guess."

"Try not to think about what?" He asks, pen hovering above his notebook.

"...Anything related to the problem, people, memories, whatnot. I just try to occupy myself with other stuff so I don't have to think about it I guess."

"What do you do to occupy yourself? Is there something you find yourself doing frequently? It could be a few different things or something specific that you notice yourself doing to try and not think about whatever it is."

The whine of police sirens starts up distantly outside and Izuku can feel himself tense. He clears his throat, eyes shifting away from the window. "…self-destructive… I tend to get self-destructive."

Shirakumo watches him carefully, his eyes are understanding, open in a professional way that tells Midoriya he won't overstep the thin boundary between them. But, most importantly, there's no judgment in the man's mismatched eyes.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

The boy shifts nervously. “I kept putting myself in dangerous situations.” He can feel phantom heat prickling at the back of his neck and rubs at it in annoyance.

“What kind of dangerous situations?”

Izuku's jaw clamps shut. *I’m saying too much.*

Oboro notices his hesitance, he waits a moment to give Izuku a chance to continue before pushing forward. “Personal growth doesn't always require a better understanding of your past Midoriya, but personal healing does.” He leans back in his seat. “Recovery is a journey, not a destination. Some days will be harder for you than others. I won't lie and say that therapy or medication will fix everything, but it's a place for us to start. This is the first time we’ve met, you don’t know me. You don’t have to tell me anything you don’t want to and we don’t have to talk about something that you’re not ready to share. That being said, I want you to be aware that anything you say to me, whether we’re in this room or outside it, will be kept confidential. Legally speaking, even if your parents or guardian were to ask after what we discussed I wouldn’t be able to tell them anything with the only exception being if I believe that either you or someone else is in danger.”

The knot in Izuku's chest remains as dormant as a dead star, unmoved by Shirakumo’s words. Izuku will never be able to fully open up to this man. He wonders if the other can sense this as Izuku watches him write something else down.

Midoriya says nothing and Shirakumo can tell from this alone that he’s being shut out before their conversation can really begin.

He changes plans.

“UA’s sports festival is this weekend. Do you plan on participating?”

Izuku is understandably caught off guard by the sudden change in topic. “Yes.” His answer is short, tense. In truth, he hasn’t actually talked to anyone about taking part in the events. He doesn’t even know if the school will let him considering he wasn’t allowed to attempt the hero course exam. He forces himself to relax. This man is here to help him. “I’m fully healed now so I was cleared for physical activity.”

“Are you nervous?”

The sports festival is Izuku's last chance of getting into UA's hero course. But, it wasn't his last chance of becoming a hero. The night before he and Reo spent hours on the phone with one another researching every option possible. In reality, he didn't even need a school to become a hero, though that was ideal and would teach him many of the things he needs to know about legal heroism. They'd discovered that, truthfully, the only things he *needs* are a hero sponsor and the skills to pass the licensing exam. Even so, he nods a silent 'yes' to the man's question.

"Why do you think you're experiencing that feeling?"

He'll be going head to head against kids strong enough to make it through the entrance exam Izuku wasn't allowed to take. He'll be competing against the likes of Bakugou and Todoroki Shouto in hopes of taking gold right from underneath their nose.

"There'll be a lot of strong opponents," Izuku murmurs.

The therapist nods gently, writing something down. Izuku eyes the movements of his pen nervously. "Well," the man says, looking up at him with that same kind smile he had when Izuku first came in, "I wish you the best of luck. I'll be rooting for you."

Izuku feels something inside him soften. He offers a small, weak smile of his own. "I'll do my best."

That's all anyone can really ask of him after all.

Inko sneaks glances at him the whole way home. They don't say much and Izuku can tell she's trying so hard not to overstep his boundaries.

"Do you think he'll be a good fit?" She asks nervously. "Dr. Sui said that we might have to visit a few different offices to find someone that you'll click with. But, I guess you might not really know until you've gone to see him a few times so you don't have to answer that right now. Or if you do you can always change your mind about it later of course!"

Izuku smiles softly at the sound of her rambling. "I like him so far. He seems pretty nice."

Inko nods along, anxiously biting at her lip. "That's good then. If anything changes just let me know and we can start looking for

someone new." There's a short bout of silence before she quickly changes the subject. "How about we go out to eat tonight? It's been a while since we've gone anywhere."

"Soba might be good," he replies. She likes soba. "I heard there was a new place nearby that opened up recently."

He can see Inko visibly relax next to him, a smile curling at her lips. "Look up the address and we can drop in."

The moment Izuku sets foot in UA that Friday he can feel the buzz of excitement in the air. The sports festival is tomorrow and, besides those few that may have opted out, everyone would be participating. Both his class and everyone in his year would become tomorrow's enemies and everyone is aware of it. The sports festival is a national event, something that, after the emergence of quirks, became more popular than even the Olympics.

Izuku and Reo weave their way through the school's hectic morning crowds. "I can't believe you're gonna be fighting the third years," Midoriya states. "That's gotta be scary right? You'll be facing off against people that'll be actual heroes by the end of the year."

Reo shrugs. "By the end of the year I'll be making their support gear full time. We've both had to hone our skills in our own ways so it's really not any different from any other year. The first year is the hardest in my opinion since you don't know everyone's abilities yet."

Izuku hums in thought. "You're right about that. I won't know what everyone's capable of until I've fought them."

"If you want to do some research beforehand there's a few third-years in the business department that trade quirk info on the first-years for different favors. Usually, it's just for the benefit of the older kids though." They pause outside Midoriya's class and Reo's voice drops to a whisper, "The Second and third-year business students usually run an underground betting ring during the sports festival on who will win. I'm pretty sure Nedzu knows about it, but they haven't gotten in trouble for it yet so it's become a sort of traditional thing."

Izuku snorts. "It's probably because he thinks it'll build good business skills."

"Probably," Reo chuckles. "Alright, I'll see you at lunch. Let me know

if you want that info though and I'll talk with someone." Reo waves goodbye just as Izuku catches sight of Shinsou's lilac hair bobbing down the hall towards them. They both say hello as they pass each other.

Izuku smiles as Shinsou stops beside him outside the classroom. His smile is all teeth. "I hope you're ready for tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? What was tomorrow again?" Izuku teases as they slip into class.

"You wanna go intimidate the hero course with me later?"

"What kind of idea is that," Izuku splutters with a laugh, "That'll just put you on their radar."

Shinsou shrugs. "If I rile them up now that'll only help me in the long run."

They take their seats and Izuku turns to look at him. "Is that part of your quirk?" he asks. It's an innocent enough question, but Izuku can see the way Shinsou's lingering smirk slides from his lips.

"Not really, but it could give me a better chance at winning." He looks away, digging absently through his backpack and Izuku can tell that's where the conversation will end.

Maybe the real reason Shinsou hadn't introduced himself with his quirk on that first day of class was more complicated than Izuku had originally thought.

Standing in the locker room makes him nervous. His new scars prickle. He got lucky yesterday, he'd managed to avoid changing in front of anyone. Today, however, he's not so lucky.

The scars on his side are noticeable, but not so much as the handprint burned into the nape of his neck. It draws immediate notice no matter how quickly he tries to change. It's pink and fleshy and raised from his skin in a way that even his hair, that's become unruly within the last month, can't quite cover. The uniform collar thankfully comes up high enough to shield it, but with a good third of the locker room having already seen it, this fact isn't enough to stop the rumors that would likely spread.

Shinsou doesn't take note of it, or if he does, he simply ignores it. Either way, Izuku's thankful for it.

Eraserhead is in the gym when he and Shinsou arrive for P.E. He's not teaching, just briefly speaking with a disgruntled-looking Vlad King before class as the remaining students slowly trickle in from the locker rooms. Izuku isn't as disturbed to see him as he was last time, but it's still a surreal sight. He flexes his fingers, an odd sense of guilt flooding him upon seeing the man still shrouded in bandages despite Izuku having already made a full recovery.

Shinsou comes up beside him, gently knocking shoulders with the teen. "I wonder what they'll have us doing today." It's enough to drag him away from any more thoughts of the USJ or scars or looming monsters with blood on its hands.

"You'd have a better guess than me. This'll be my fourth time actually participating," he chuckles. Izuku hopes it doesn't come out too strained.

"I hope it's a game," the girl in front of them states, glancing at the duo over her shoulder. She faces forward again. "I think Vlad King forgets that we're not in one of his hero classes. I always feel like we're training for something when he teaches."

Izuku wracks his brain for the girl's name, but can only remember her adhesion quirk. Shinsou glances at him, mouthing the girl's name. *"Zheng Bao."*

Ever since Midoriya had returned from the hospital, Shinsou has been slowly helping him learn the names of all his classmates. Being gone for so long made him into an outcast of sorts. Not in the way he had been at Aldera, but in the sense that everyone in their class has already gotten to know each other. Even though he was there for the first two days of class, he still gets the feeling he's been marked as a mid-year transfer. He's sure his newfound scars certainly won't help.

Izuku mouths a *"thank you,"* back at his friend as the last of their classmates finally arrive. Eraserhead is gone the next time he looks for him and Vlad King takes their full attention with the start of class.

The hero clears his throat. "With the sports festival beginning tomorrow, I'll be letting you all off a little easier with a game of capture the flag." A relieved sigh goes through the students. "I'll split

you into two teams first and then we can go from there." The man begins picking through the list of names, pointing left or right as he goes. "Shinsou, red team. Zheng, red team. Midoriya," he looks up, searching for the boy.

"Yes sir?"

"You're able to participate, correct?"

"Yes sir. Recovery Girl cleared me a few days ago."

Vlad nods, glancing back down at the roster. "You'll be on blue team them. Let me know if you need to sit out at any point."

"Wh— No fair, Sensei! Can't we have Midoriya on our team?" One of the girls whines.

"No way!" someone from the blue side shouts. "Midnight put him on your team yesterday! He's ours!"

Izuku turns to Shinsou in genuine confusion but finds the teen with a smirk pulling at his lips.

"You're good at sports," Shinsou mouths at him.

Izuku flushes.

"That'd make the teams uneven. Midoriya, go get a blue belt."

The boy lets out a quiet laugh of disbelief. He was sure of it before, but now he's certain.

He's not at Aldera anymore.

Reo's return to the lunchroom is a comforting occurrence. Izuku's happy to have his friend back, but there's a noticeable disquiet that settles in the in-between moments.

Reo had accepted his apology from the night before, but hasn't *forgiven* him. He wasn't ready to and Midoriya understood that better than most.

He hadn't gone in seeking Reo's forgiveness. Even after so many months, he remembers the conclusion he'd come to in the wake of Naomasa's hospitalization.

“Seek amends, not forgiveness.”

This, thankfully, isn’t one of those in-between moments.

“Lunch Rush really has the best food,” Reo mumbles around the noodles in his mouth, fake crying into his pasta.

“Your mother would cry to hear that,” Izuku replies, smirking.

“She’d be crying into this pasta right beside me. You have to try it next time.”

“What, you won’t even give me a bite?”

“No, bitch.”

Izuku bursts into laughter before he can even remember to be offended. He turns to Shinsou, puppy dog eyes activated. “You’d give me a bite, wouldn’t you?”

“You should stop asking people to bite you, Midoriya. It’s not sanitary.” Shinsou says, a mischievous smirk slipping into place.

"WHAT?" Izuku gapes, slack jawed for a moment.

Reo chokes on his food, coughing out a laugh.

Izuku grins at his friend’s misfortune, thumping his back as he coughs up his food.

“Ow, ow! You’re too strong,” Reo laughs, leaning away.

“Deserved.”

“For not sharing my pasta with you?!”

“I agree with Midoriya on this one,” Shinsou says.

“You didn’t share with him either!” Reo exclaims in mock exasperation.

Shinsou grins at him impishly.

“I’m being bullied. This is bullying,” Reo says dramatically, sneakily taking another bite of pasta. “You’re so mean to me,” he tells them, doing his best to hide the fact that he has food in his mouth.

“Good,” Izuku and Shinsou site in sync.

After school, he parts ways with Shinsou to meet Reo at UA’s entrance before making their way towards their train.

“You’re starting back at the dojo today, right?” Reo asks quietly once they’ve boarded.

Midoriya nods. “I was hoping for more time to train before the festival but I’ll take what I can get.” He shrugs. “ There’s a lot of muscles that I haven’t been able to use lately so I’m worried about not being able to give it my all.”

“Whether you’re in good shape or not is beside the point. You’ll still be giving all that you’re currently capable of and that all that anyone can ask of you.”

“What if the hero course asks for more than I have?” Izuku asks softly. He can feel doubt well up in his chest, threatening to spill through his ribcage.

“Then there are other ways, remember? They’re not as preferable. They’ll be difficult and require more work on your part, but—” Reo trails off, waiting for Izuku to finish the sentence.

“-but I’ve never shied away from hard work,” he concedes with a quiet laugh.

“Exactly.”

Izuku lets his head lull to the side, resting it on the boy’s arm. The world outside the window passes in a blur of gray and white and the occasional splash of some brightly colored advertisement or billboard. “Thank you,” he whispers over the clatter of the train car, “for always being here.”

Reo falls silent and Izuku feels himself tense, suddenly reminded of the fact that although the older teen was being supportive that he was not yet forgiven. He’s broken his trust too many times, been forgiven too many times. It would take more than the apology he sobbed into the boy’s shoulder just days before. Trust was not something easily repaired. Actions, time and actions are what it’ll take to fully repair their relationship.

He lifts his head, bile rising in the back of his throat, burning his esophagus. He was getting too comfortable with someone that was not ready to forgive him.

“It’s what friends are supposed to do,” Reo eventually supplies as the train begins to slow. This is where the line between them is drawn at the moment. This is as far as he’s allowed to go.

“I… I also want to be that person for you,” Izuku whispers, “Someone you can rely on.” The words are too quiet for Reo to hear.

His stop has arrived.

“I’ll keep an eye out for the first-year events tomorrow, but I don’t know how much I’ll be able to catch.”

Midoriya forces a small smile. “I’ll do the same. Show ‘em what you’re made of.”

“You too.”

Izuku slips off the train with the rest of the crowd.

Reo sighs as he leaves, shoulders slumping.

The dojo’s front window glints in the sun, blinding him momentarily when he gets close enough. The painted lettering on the glass that declares the dojo’s name seems to have been redone recently. Izuku can’t help but wonder if Chee Sensei had done it herself.

He catches sight of Hirano through the window and the moment he sets foot inside she lets out a loud exclamation of, *“Midoriya!”* She rushes towards him, enveloping him in a hug. “You were gone for so long,” she whines. “I had to fight Gamon so many times!”

The person in question appears behind her. “You do know that he’d beat you as well, right? He’s literally better than me,” Gamon laughs.

“Yeah, but at least he’s not mean to me.” She sticks her tongue out at them as they approach.

“When was I ever mean to you!” Gamon splutters.

“You didn’t let me win any of our sparring matches!”

“Maybe if you tried getting good I would need to '*let you win’*. ”

Izuku chuckles and Hirano responds with a playful huff of indignity. She releases Izuku and Gamon steps over to offer him a solid pat on the back. They usher him further into the dojo.

“We were all worried after you collapsed. Chee Sensei kept telling us you’d be fine, but with you MIA the vibes in here were completely off. Everyone’ll be glad to see you’re here.” Gamon grins.

“I could say the same. I feel like I’ve gone rusty. I need to get in a bit of practice before the sports festival tomorrow,” he explains, shaking out his limbs. “I’m fine and everything, but I can tell I’m a bit out of shape.”

“Even so, I’m sure you’ll still be able to beat me,” Gamon sighs.

“I’ll be watching for you on tv tomorrow! Make a good name for our dojo!” Hirano laughs, throwing a few mock punches.

Izuku grins, feeding off her excitement. “I’ll do my best.”

Ji-Woo appears from her office, freckles glowing softly when she catches sight of them. “Welcome back, Midoriya.”

Izuku offers her a reassuring smile. “It’s good to be back.”

Izuku's relieved at how easy it is for him to slip back into his old movements. It’s clear that although he hasn’t been able to make use of them recently that his body hasn’t forgotten what to do. Izuku is… tired after training and his muscles burn, but the pain and the fatigue feel *good.* It’s been some two weeks since he was able to feel blood pumping through his veins like this. The sun in his chest feels hot, burning with a brilliant light.

There’s excitement in his limbs, there’s *hope*.

He can do this. He can win. He can prove himself.

It's easier than usual for him to fall asleep that night.

Tomorrow will be the start of his new beginning.

April 29, 2232

7:09 AM

Sansa has to hold him up to keep the man from collapsing right there on the beach. It's barely 7 am but the area's already been cordoned off to onlookers, yellow police tape running the perimeter of Dagobah.

Naomasa doesn't cry, not yet.

He's a seasoned police detective, this discovery was only one of a dozen other cases he's worked just like it. Why did he have to get so attached?

Sansa guides him to a toppled fridge he can sit on. Neither of them says anything.

Words of comfort would be meaningless here.

He folds into himself, crushed by gravity.

The universe grinds to a halt before his feet. The last year of his life is now meaningless. Naomasa has totally and unequivocally *failed.*

Detective Nakajima glances at them as he strides past. He catches Sansa's eyes and jerks his head towards the row of police vehicles lining the street behind them. "Get him out of here," he grunts. "He shouldn't've come."

Naomasa lets his head fall into his hands, a numbing feeling overriding his senses.

The body he was so desperate to believe didn't exist had just washed ashore.

Pied Piper was dead and soon enough the rest of Musutafu would know as well.

Chapter End Notes

> WOOOOOOOOOOO. This was literally one of the hardest chapters I've had to write and it's solely because of that opening scene. So special thanks to Suz and Gray for that one, they are so

pogchamp for helping me out and you should go check out their stuff. Suz has a VERY COOL fic that you should check out here here.
Gray also has some very pogchamp fics that you can check out as well over and here.
ALSO HUGE SHOUT OUT TO THE BEST BETA TM AVERY, I WOULD NOT KNOW WHAT I'D DO WITHOUT YOU ILY

The sports festival is quickly approaching and with it the fallout of the death of Pied Piper. Big things are coming, I hope you're ready to face them. Hold hands chat, it's about to be quite the ride. I wonder what'll happen.

Until next time!

Protostar

Chapter Summary

UA's Sports Festival kicks itself into full swing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Art:

fretful-ferret x x x

The world holds its breath in anticipation.

The light flashes green.

Their class marches forward.

"**It's class 1-A!**" Yamada's voice booms through the stadium. "Following class B, there's classes C, D, and E of General Studies! And here comes the Support Course classes F, G, and H! And the Business Course I, J, and K!"

The stadium is bright and *loud.* There's cheering all around them, a buzz of excitement permeating the air.

All eyes are trained on hero course students.

1-A had survived a villain attack and while not all of them had been forced to fight, their association with the event alone was enough for their names to be cast in lights. The whole of Japan was anticipating the showcase of the skills that had sowed their survival against villains.

It both takes the pressure off of him and multiplies it tenfold.

"We're just here to make the hero course look good," a girl states from ahead of them.

Zheng Bao, he reminds himself, *adhesive quirk.*

Her friend beside her nods. "It's hard to get motivated like this. Even Present Mic looks like he's supporting them more than us."

Zheng shrugs. "He's a hero before he's a teacher. I guess we should've seen it coming."

Izuku bites his lip.

"You're welcome to sit out for the Sports Festival if you'd prefer," Yamada's voice echoes anxiously in his head. *"I'm sure you're still recovering from your time in the hospital."*

Izuku remembers smiling at him in that special customer service kind of way, five parts disappointment, two parts disbelief, ten parts sheltered anger. *"Thank you for worrying, but I've been fully healed for a while now. I'm excited to participate."*

Present Mic was able to feel it, Izuku's animosity. The boy could tell

by the way he'd tensed, he could tell by the noticeable surprise in the hero's eyes.

Izuku was not one to be pitied.

Yamada was now painfully aware of this.

"If you're sure."

"I am."

"Still, you'd think he'd show some support for this homeroom class," she huffs.

They line up in rows of two in front of the small stage they have set up on the far side of the stadium. Midnight stands center stage, dressed in her hero uniform. The hero cracks her whip and a hushed quiet falls over the crowd. "Now! For the athlete's oath, to be presented by your student representative, Bakugou Katsuki of class 1-A!"

Izuku flinches at the name, head snapping towards the commotion that arises near the blonde as he makes his way towards the stage. He hasn't seen the teen since the USJ. The burn scar on the back of his neck burns like fire. *He saved me from that woman.*

Izuku hates it. He hates that he'd been saved by the same hands that had scarred him. He hates that, in that moment, Bakugou had looked every bit the hero Izuku has always known he'd be.

Katsuki walks up the step with a cool confidence, casually taking his spot in front of the microphone. "The athlete's oath…" His eyes are steady, unwavering. "Make no mistake about it." He grins, leaning into the mic. "I'm gonna take first place!"

Izuku grits his teeth as Bakugou looks out over the crowd of students now voicing their anger as they break ranks.

"Dirty bastard!"

"Watch your backs 1-A!"

Katsuki's grin only widens. "The least you can do is serve as my stepping stones."

It was obvious that the teen in front of him has not changed at all since his time at UA.

Bakugou's red eyes find his green ones in the crowd. He takes note of the surprise that the other hides just as quickly as it comes.

Izuku has been holding himself back around Katsuki for years. He's a little tired of doing so.

He mouths two simple words at the boy. *"You'll lose."*

Fury ignites across Bakugou's face and the last he sees of Izuku is his smile before the crowd rushes over the boy like the gentle lapping of waves, hiding him from sight.

"Now!" Midnight booms. "It's time to announce our first event!" A holographic screen appears behind the hero, flickering to life. Two words materialize on it.

"The Maze!" she exclaims. "This is a race between the members of all eleven classes!" A rumbling starts up to their right as a cement gate pulls itself apart, folding into itself like pieces of origami. The crowd of students makes their way towards it, drawn to it like moths to a flame. "The track is a half-lap around the stadium that we've built just for today! Along the way, you will encounter traps and obstacles of all kinds!" Midnight extends her arms out in a showman way. "UA preaches freedom in all things, that's why, as long as you stay within the boundaries of the maze, anything goes! The first 45 students to reach the finish line will continue onto the next round!"

Izuku stares down the three lights lining the top of the starting gate. The first is lit up red.

"I wish you all luck! Now, racers, to your positions!"

Shinsou smirks at him from the side. "Let's win this."

The second light above them flares a bright yellow.

Midoirya nods tersely.

He takes a deep breath, calming himself. He's been waiting for a chance to prove himself since he was five.

The final light flashes green.

"Start!"

Midoirya notices immediately that the first real obstacle of the maze would the narrow path at its start. He tries his best to stay towards the

front of the group in an attempt to avoid this but quickly finds himself pushing against the crowd in front of him nonetheless. Everyone is shouting, surging forward. He feels someone step on his foot and he, in turn, feels himself step on someone else's.

There's a sudden burst of cold air that shoots down the hall, signaling what could be the first quirk usage of the round. Izuku spies ice crawling up the walls ahead of them as strained cries go up from the front of the pack. A chain of explosions follows after it, making his ears ring as he takes an elbow to the side.

He grimaces.

"1-A's Todoroki is the first to make it into the maze! Sabotaging his fellow classmates in the process! But 1-A's Bakugou is close behind him!"

"Midoriya!" Shinsou's voice carries over the crowd, it's calm, steadying. Izuku looks up to find him reaching a hand down towards him. He is… being carried by a handful of other students. A few of them he recognizes as kids from their class, but he recognizes at least one as being from one of the hero courses. "Take my hand! You have to make it into the maze to win," he shouts, smirking down at him.

Izuku's not dumb enough to hesitate. He takes his hand, dragging himself up and using the backs of other students to haul himself towards his friend. "Thanks," he breathes.

"We'll be enemies once we make it through here." Shinsou grins.

"I wouldn't have it any other way," Izuku laughs.

"Get us out of here!" Shinsou commands the people carrying them. The ride is an uncomfortable one for Izuku, it's obvious that whatever formation the team had decided on hadn't had the foresight to include Midoriya in them. But, with their help, they're all able to reach the other end of the tunnel with ease.

The ground outside is icy, a thick pillar of ice stretching up towards the top of the wall. Like the cold, the stench of nitroglycerin lingers in the air. Izuku chokes on it as he jumps off Shinsou's human-formed taxi service, steadying himself on the ice. The path splits two ways here. Shinsou salutes him from above. "Good luck."

Izuku nods.

No other words are exchanged.

Izuku makes a break for the left path and rounds the corner. The walls of the maze tower menacingly above him, a good two stories above his head. Izuku grits his teeth. There's sounds of fighting ahead of him and the next corner he rounds reveals nearly a dozen students all facing off against a hoard of robots that are all at least twenty-some feet tall.

He curses.

"It seems our front runners for the event are experiencing a bit of trouble towards the center of the maze! I wonder how they'll handle this situation!"

I can't fight those. How'd they expect some of us to win against stuff like this?

It shouldn't surprise Izuku so much to realize that they *didn't.* UA *didn't expect kids like him to make it past obstacles like these.* A metal tendril rips through the crowd of students, sending two kids flying into the wall and another handful running for cover. He's close enough to be within range of the attack and ducks past it, rolling out of the way before it gets too close. Behind him it closes around air before retracting violently, cracking someone harshly on the back like a whip on its return.

He watches as a shining beam of light tears straight through the head of it, toppling the robot into the inside corner of the wall with a screeching crash.

He marvels at the power of the quirk for only a moment before he looks towards the top of the wall, then back at the robot's corpse. His heart races excitedly in his chest.

If anything goes, then… the tops of the walls are still technically within the maze's boundaries, right? Midoriya bares his teeth, part grin, part grimace.

He'll never make it into the top forty-five if he had to force his way through any more obstacles like this.

He makes a mad dash for the downed robot, clambering up its body and straight towards the concrete wall. The robot is wedged into a corner, giving Midoriya all the access he needs to be able to use it as a sort of springboard. He makes a leap from the highest point, pushing his foot against one side of the wall and propelling him just high enough to reach the ledge. His chest hit the wall rather hard, leaving him a little out of breath as his hands claw at the top of the wall. Loose concrete digs painfully into the flesh of his bare fingers and palms, his feet scrambling for purchase before he manages to haul himself the rest of the way up.

As soon as he's found his balance he takes off. The height would be dizzying for anyone other than an ex-vigilante. The walls are thick enough to cause anyone trying to break straight through them difficulty, but this means they're also thick enough for Midoriya to comfortably run across.

Izuku's able to bypass the main crowd quickly from up here. At this pace, he'll be able to finish somewhere within the top percentile, just enough for him to make it to the second round. He could *win* like this. Below him, the maze path narrows, and Midoriya makes a running leap across the gap between walls, loose concrete raining down on the heads of a few students below trying to make it past another group of robots, albeit these are much smaller than the ones from before.

Are all of the obstacles just robots?

All around him are signs of chaos.

The group he'd just left isn't the only one struggling to push their way through the maze. He passes a small group trying to make their way across a set of suspension ropes that dispels his previous theory. The ropes are strung across a chasm half the length of a football field and although heights didn't bother him much anymore, he's thankful he won't need to crawl his way over that obstacle.

At the center of the maze, there's a large courtyard-like area where a series of explosions go off. They draw the eyes of what few other people had shared Midoriya's idea to scale the walls. It's there that he catches sight of Bakugou flying up out of the middle of the maze.

He's always wondered if Katsuki's explosions were strong enough to get him airborne.

Izuku realizes in that moment just how easy it will be for the boy to take first like this. The thought lasts only long enough to watch as a

metal tendril whips up from the ground in the middle, wrapping around the teen's ankle and dragging him out of sight. Bakugou lets out a guttural shout as he falls, followed by another series of crackling explosions as he tries to free himself. A spike of ice, similar to the pillar he'd seen at the start, bursts out of the same area Katsuki was being held up at. Its appearance sends out a strong blast of freezing air towards him, he drops low, hanging onto the wall as he watches another student, who's too close to the fight to properly react to the threat, topple off.

The air buffets his hair back, stinging his cheeks and making his eyes water.

"And 1-A's Awase is thrown off the top of the wall by Todoroki's indirect attack! OH! He's caught himself with his quirk! Welding himself to the wall before he can fall the entire way down! Yowza! My shoulder hurts just from watching that! Pog through the pain, little listener!"

As soon as Izuku's back up he takes a running jump at the gap between walls, redirecting himself away from the middle. If both Bakugou and Todoroki were being preoccupied with whatever hellish obstacle was planted there then that's all the information he needs to decide on avoiding it altogether. There's no way he'll be able to make it past whatever *that* is.

It's probably made specifically to prevent people with advantageous quirks from finishing too quickly.

"DIE!"

The audience is expecting a show.

An explosion rocks the out from the middle, replacing Todoroki's cool air with an intense, familiar heat that threatens to trigger his fight or flight response. Midoriya grits his teeth, leaning into the explosion to prevent himself from being toppled backward.

A thin smoke drifts across the maze, guided by the wind. He breathes deep, suppressing a cough when it tickles his lungs. He pushes himself to keep running.

With seemingly both of the front runners still stuck in the middle of the maze, Izuku feels excitement burning in his limbs.

At the rate he's currently going he'll be able to finish higher in the ranks than he initially believed. He grins as he runs, sweat slipping down his cheek and sticking pieces of his hair to his forehead.

He runs faster than he's run in a long time.

He can win.

That's when the section of the wall beneath his feet rises suddenly. The initial shock of it sends him to his knees where he can do nothing but cling to the moving section for dear life. Finally, after rising an additional two stories high, it stops.

His heart pounds wildly in his chest.

He's stuck.

"It seems 1-C's Midoriya becomes the first student to discover that the walls of the maze function as obstacles themselves! The event organizers have planned for every case scenario! They can't let anyone make it to the end too quickly!"

He gives himself a moment to steady his pulse before leaning carefully over the edge, staring down with widened eyes. A few bits of loose concrete tumble off the top of the wall beneath his hands.

He can feel his panic rising, but he needs to be calm. He has to think quickly.

Do the walls sense people? Or just the weight change?

It's a two-story drop to the next section of the wall and four stories to the floor of the maze. For anyone other than a professional two stories had the potential to break an ankle or tear a tendon. Worst case scenario you could snap much more than just your ankle. Even the single-story drops that Izuku was forced to become accustomed to over the last year could be dangerous if done wrong. Midoriya was somewhat acquainted with parkour, he had to be to be successful as a vigilante in a large city like this one, but he was far from a professional.

However, he needs to get down. If he's stranded up here for much longer then he'll have no chance of making it to the second round.

Is jumping worth the risk?

He watches the loose concrete fall, bouncing off the lower section of the wall as it hits. That's when Midoriya's earlier theories are put to the test and clarified. Because despite there being no student on the wall it still rises.

Weight then. Possibly vibrations, no, no, just weight.

He leans back as the wall gets closer, stopping at the same height as the one he's on now.

He stands, steadying his breathing and walking onto the next half of the wall. Lengthwise it's the same as the previous one, adding an extra ten feet for him to pace across. Again he looks down at the next portion of the wall.

He has no way of knowing how many of the walls are rigged like the ones he's standing on. As far as he's aware, these could be the only two. But, from this high up he can quite literally see the finish line. He can see exactly where he needs to go, what path he has to take to win. He turns from the edge, bending down to pick up as many chunks of loose concrete that he can find, a plan formulating in his head. There's still a good stretch of open wall below him, some sixty to seventy feet before it hits a corner and dead ends.

If all of them rise, and if all of them are the same ten-foot section, then that gives him at least six chances for what he's about to do.

He drops a stone, watches it hit the wall below him. He counts to six as it rises, and then jumps.

The first drop is higher than he'd like, his timing was a little off, but there's nothing that can be done about it now. His feet hit the wall rather hard, but he pushes himself into a narrow roll. There's not enough room on top of the wall for a proper one, this one puts too much pressure on his spine. But, he can't hesitate in pushing himself back up and throwing another pebble at the next section of wall with the one he's still on continuing to rise. If he waits too long it'll be for nothing.

He jumps.

This landing is easier, and he's back on his feet in no time, tossing another pebble, counting to three, and jumping again.

"Look out listeners! It seems 1-C's Midoriya isn't out of the race after

all! He's turned this obstacle into his own set of stairs!"

His ankles and knees are feeling the stress of every jump. Even in his vigilante days he never had to land so many consecutive jumps.

But, he can't hesitate. He hurls another rock, jumping before it even has time to hit the wall below him. He's so close. If he times everything just right then he'll be able to jump the gap between the corner and the next wall over. He can only pray that nothing on the opposite side is boobytrapped as well.

The concrete pings against the wall beneath him.

He should've hesitated.

Instead of rising, the wall begins to *fall.*

Time seems to slow around him

"Take a swan dive off the roof!"

He doesn't know what's falling faster, himself or the wall below him.

He feels weightless, almost as if he's entered a sort of free fall around the Earth.

There are shouts from below him as several students notice his descent.

"He'll die!"

He won't. Izuku knows this, but it's going to hurt like hell.

The wall is almost flush with the ground when he lands. Pain shoots up his legs and he throws himself into a side roll as quickly as possible to distribute the force when he feels something in his ankle threatening to give. The roll sends him tumbling gracelessly off the side of the wall in a tangle of limbs, but with no more than two feet between it and the ground he fares little more than a few extra bumps and bruises in addition.

He stumbles up as the wall finally falls flush with the maze floor, right ankle twinging with pain when he puts weight on it.

"What's this?! 1-A's Todoroki has once again taken the official lead!

Leave it to Endeavor's son to become the first to make his escape from the center of the maze! If 1-A's Bakugou takes much longer he'll miss his chance at taking first!"

Izuku spits bits of sand out of his mouth, looking around.

He hadn't been able to tell from so high up, but it's clear now that this section of the maze's floor had been replaced by sand for as far as he can see. But, other than that it seems empty. He glances at the few students behind him. There's a girl that comes jogging towards him, struggling to move as quickly on the shifting terrain.

Is the sand only here to slow people down? But… from what I've seen so far, that's not flashy enough for UA's standards.

It's because Izuku's on the lookout for it that he sees it coming before everyone else does. "Something's coming!" He calls. The ground beneath them shudders, moving as if it had suddenly found the need to breathe. The girl behind him yelps and Izuku turns to find a spider-like robot clawing its way out of the sand beside her.

He was right about the sand not being flashy enough.

"Get down!" He yanks her out of the way, pulling her to the ground and shielding her with his body as a claw-like limb sweeps over their heads with a mechanical whir.

"They're really trying to kill us!" the girl sobs below him.

Izuku grits his teeth, pinching his eyes closed as its appearance throws clouds of sand and dust into the air. He can hear all the other students yelling incoherently around him and peeks his eyes open to see another five of the robots crawling their way out of the sand.

They're all some sixteen feet high, each equipped with six limbs, four with wide, flat bases for stabilization and two front limbs with pointed, hook-like feet for attacking.

He scrambles up, dragging the girl with him and pushing her towards the rest of the students where she'll be safer. "Go!" He shouts, rolling out of the way of a steel, camel-shaped hoof aiming to flatten him. Izuku reaches for a weapon that doesn't exist, glancing at his hip and cursing when he realizes there's nothing there. *I can't just punch a robot,* he seethes internally. A pointed front limb swings out at him and he drops back to the ground, keeping low.

He'd gotten lucky the first time he encountered the robots at the start of the maze. There were more students then, stronger students with quirks more suited to this type of opponent. He was able to leave it to them and make his escape to the top of the walls. But behind him everyone sticks close to one another, scared, fearful, and the vigilante remnants in him burns within like the great, final flare of a dying star as it eats through the last of its fuel.

If he can't fight them himself, and if no one else steps up to the plate then really there's only one option. It's easy enough to clamber up the back leg of the robot once he gets behind it. His ankle rebels against his plan, but he's fought in states worse than these. The bots' defenses are weak in the back, its two spidery limbs unable to reach so far around.

That's why UA planted more than one robot beneath the sands, so that they could, in turn, cover their weaknesses with reinforcements.

Izuku climbs his way over the bot's back, stopping only once he's reached its head. He stands atop it boldly, staring down the vermilion camera piece of the next nearest robot.

Shouts go up from the remaining students as it stomps towards him, raising its arm, readying to attack.

He has just enough time to dodge, sliding down the robot's back to safety.

The second bot's pointed front limb slams into the steel, head plating where Izuku was standing just moments before. It pierces the hull with ease, tearing through all the most important wiring.

The robot begins to grind to a halt beneath him, mechanical limbs shuddering as Izuku tries to keep his balance.

He waits for the other to pull its appendage out, prepared to dodge again. He doesn't know whether it's a good thing or not that it *can't.* There's a screech of metal against metal as the bot tries to drag its arm out to no avail.

Midoriya hesitates at this, forcing himself to formulate a new plan. He'll have to be quick.

He clambers back towards the head of the robot, baring his teeth as he uses the second bot's trapped limb as a bridge between the two. And he watches from his new spot, as the original bot, whose head can no

longer move but whose spidery limbs still creep jerkily upwards in preparation of a killing downwards swing. Izuku manages to count to ten before its pointed claw pierces straight through the other bot's 'eye' and into whatever else lies behind.

He looks over his shoulder at the students huddled at the edge of the sand. "Well?" He calls out, "Are you just going to give up here after coming so far! I didn't even need to use a quirk to take these down!"

At first, he thinks his words do nothing, that his rallying cry falls on hearts turned cold from fear. But, he watches as one girl takes a hesitant step onto the sand. He turns away from them then, raising a defiant fist in a symbol of solidarity. "Anyone can be a hero!" He shouts. His words probably sound flashier than he'd like, and for being something he'd come up with on his own, the words probably shake him more than those behind him. But, they feel like a sort of acceptance to Izuku. They feel like an acceptance of the future he was soon to carve out for himself. Whether this festival would become the tool he used to carve it or not feels insignificant in the face of the determination he feels flooding through him.

"We can't let the hero courses show us up!" Someone from the crowd calls waveringly.

"Show them you're not someone to be looked down on!" Izuku makes a careful but quick descent from the robot's back as the other three drip sand from their gears, marching towards the group. Izuku, unfortunately, doesn't have time to deal with the remaining ones. He pushes through the pain in his ankle, slipping beneath their lanky limbs where they can't reach him. "Their backs are vulnerable!" This is the last bit of advice he has for them.

"Oh? It seems several of the hero course students have teamed up to bash a hole through the wall that has blocked them in! With three and a half feet of concrete and steel between them and freedom, just how long will it take for them to escape!"

Midoriya plows onward, feet steady on the sand after having trained at Dagobah for so many months. The end of the maze was within grasp and there was nothing in heaven nor in hell that would stop him from being one of the first forty-five to pass through that gate. From as high up as he'd been he was able to see the exact path he needs to take to get where he's going. Midoriya weaves his way through the rest of the maze with relative ease, picking his way across the

legitimate minefield he encounters on his way to the safety of the finish line. He watches as a kid ahead of him gets roughly blasted up all the way to the top of the wall, desperately clinging to it. The landing is anything but pretty.

"**1-A's Bakugou takes first place, winning the event!** 1-A's Todoroki is only seconds behind! If those final robots hadn't slowed him down I wonder what the end results would have been! Bakugou's ability to get himself airborne simply gave him too much of an advantage over Todoroki who was forced to freeze them before continuing!"

Izuku continues on foot, running as fast as he dares whilst keeping an eye out for any remaining traps. After passing the minefield there are few students to be seen. Izuku doesn't know whether this is a good thing or not.

"Our first event is drawing to a close! With only forty-five students moving onto the second round, it will be a nail-biting experience to see just who makes it though! Place your final bets! This race is almost over!"

When Midoriya first sets his eyes on the finish line after rounding the last corner he almost collapses from sheer relief. He's not as in shape as he was before his hospitalization, and this fact makes itself known in the fatigue that's creeping through his limbs. There's a few frozen bots guarding the exit, tilted precariously as if ready to collapse at any given moment. From this distance, he can just barely make out Shinsou and his lilac hair being carried back into the stadium.

Izuku grins after him.

The second time he sets eyes on that final gate is when a group of students burst out of the wall just ahead of him. They're covered in sweat and concrete dust. And among the group he recognizes two faces, both from 1-A.

The first is Kirishima. The second is the youngest son of the Iida family, brother of the Turbo Hero: Ingenium.

Kirishima catches sight of him first, sharkish teeth bared in a bright grin as Izuku races past them, intent on stopping for nothing until he's

crossed the finish line. But, the closer he gets the louder the groaning creaks of the frozen robots become and the warier he feels of their tilting bodies. He slows to a jog, eyeing them carefully.

The ice creaks again, and this time he *hears as it breaks free.* He curses, slowing to a stop. He glances behind him at the group of hero students tailing him. There's a word of warning on his lips that's drowned out by the sound of engines revving. His eyes catch on Iida who is still stood near the hole the group had burst out of. He's crouched in a racers position.

He has not noticed the beginning of the bot's descent.

He will not make it in time.

"Stop him!" Midoriya shouts, extending a hand out towards the group. "He'll get hurt!" His eyes are wide, *scared.*

Iida takes off like a bullet.

He passes his classmates and Izuku quickly becomes the only person between him and the falling robot.

Izuku's eyes narrow and he squares his stance. After a dozen some months of vigilantism, Midoriya Izuku has long since forgotten how to hesitate.

"I said!" Izuku spits, reaching out for the boy as he makes to pass just by him. "Stop!" Midoriya barely catches the back of Iida's uniform, holding on for all he's worth.

The speed at which the teen's going nearly wrenches his shoulder from its socket. He grits his teeth, hanging on for dear life as he all but skids across the ground from Iida's momentum. As painful as it is, it gets the job done. Iida forced himself to a halt turning to look at him in confusion just feet from where the icy bot crashes into the ground.

Izuku turns his face, shielding it with his free arm as a cloud of dust and debris flies out from the impact. The ground beneath them trembles and he can hear the further cracking of ice as more steel giants begin their collapse, crushing walls stationed too close and other bots as they topple into each other. It's ear-splittingly loud and after they've finally settled, there's shouting to be heard from the other sides of their neighboring walls.

“And all of the paths to the finish line have been blocked! Leaving handfuls of students still trapped within the maze! It seems even after 1-A’s Todoroki has made it through that he still manages to find the strength in him to inconvenience his opponents! With only eleven slots remaining who will be the final few to move on!”

The part of the maze that holds the finish line was large and box-like, each wall having its own path that leads back into the labyrinth. And with the collapse of the two-story bots, it seems that all of the passages, just like theirs, have been blocked off.

He curses.

He’ll have to climb to get through.

He thinks Iida says something to him, but Midoriya ignores it in favor of clambering his way over the robot. He can’t waste any time.

He's careful not to show off just how much his shoulder or ankle are bothering him on his way up. The other three behind him hesitate for only a moment before climbing after him.

Upon reaching the top he can see that there’s already three other students racing towards the exit as a dozen others begin their fight to climb over the icy bots.

There is nothing but open space before him.

A solar flare barrels into his rib cage, aurora lights lighting up in its wake.

He’s going to make it.

As soon as he’s sure he’ll clear the jump to the ground he makes a leap of faith. His already injured ankle protests harshly upon landing and his shoulder groans from the roll he throws himself into.

Izuku scrambles up, summoning all the strength he has in him, and *runs.*

Iida passes him in the long hall into the stadium, but he doesn’t care, doesn’t pay him any mind. He pushes himself further, faster. He doesn’t realize he’s even passed the gate until he’s blinded by the re-emergence of the sun on the other side.

The cheering inside the stadium is deafening.

“Listeners! Give a warm congratulations to the first forty-five! You’ll be seeing more of them today! This is only just the beginning!”

Chapter End Notes

WHAT'S THIS?? AN UPDATE WITHIN A WEEK??? You have fretful-ferret on tumblr to thank, we engaged ourselves in a bit of a race, which, if you're following the official tumblr account, you may have heard about already.
This chapter is a bit longer than most of the others I've written, mainly because I wanted to have the entirety of the first event in one chapter so I didn't end up prolonging things more than I wanted to. And yes!! All new events!!! We love to see it! I hope you all enjoyed the chapter, until next time!!

Quasar

Chapter Notes

> Quick update btw, I changed the number of second-round participants from 42 up to 45 in case anyone got confused. ✧

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart!!!

Ashy x

noodlekittyart

taztaztaz-blog x

fretful-ferret x x x x x x x x x x x x

jackalspine

blackholeca tw :// flashing images

Izuku lets out a heavy sigh, collapsing onto a bench just outside one of the two temporary medical tents that's been set up for the duration of the sports festival. Recovery Girl is stationed inside the one he's next to now, reserved for current contestants and those with more serious injuries. Just a few minutes before he watched a kid be rushed in with a broken arm.

Izuku tilts his head back, staring at the sky. His shoulder throbs and putting pressure on his ankle makes it protest in pain, but he'd done it. Izuku had done it. He secured his spot as one of the forty-five people to make it into the second event.

Clouds drift lazily above him, pulled across the sky by invisible threads. He closes his eyes against the sun, basking in the warmth of it.

"Next!"

The world is blue the next time he opens his eyes, gaze landing on the small woman waiting for him. She holds the tent flap open for him with her cane. "Midoriya."

She does not sound surprised to see him there. She must've been watching after all.

Izuku stands, limping towards her carefully. She eyes the injury distastefully.

"I saw your fall. If you'd been any higher this definitely would've snapped," she states, motioning at his ankle.

Izuku nods grimly, following the woman as he's ushered into the tent. "I wasn't expecting to drop from so high."

It takes his eyes a moment to adjust to the dimmer lighting as he glances around. Izuku spies the kid that'd broken their arm passed out on a cot in the far corner, snoring lightly.

"I don't think anyone was expecting it," Recovery Girl huffs. "Most of the kids that managed to get up on the walls had a quirk suited to helping them if they got knocked off."

Izuku hobbles towards an open cot that the woman points at. He can't say he's excited to see where this conversation goes.

"You, however, are an anomaly, Midoriya Izuku." She's facing away from him. "A good one, but an anomaly nonetheless." The woman turns back towards Izuku. Her eyes bore into his, unwavering. "No one will plan for your existence, because of that people will underestimate you. Use that to your advantage."

Izuku swallows nervously, caught off guard.

"You fought well."

Izuku, as bewildered as he is, can only nod.

"Now, what's hurting. I'm assuming there's more than just your ankle."

Izuku clears his throat. "My shoulder."

She sighs. "Dare I ask what happened to it?"

He laughs softly, careful as to not wake up the sleeping kid just a few cots over. "Probably not."

"That's what I figured you'd say. Do you think you've dislocated it?"

“Not quite. I definitely pulled something though.”

Recovery Girl nods, lifting his pant leg to quickly check his ankle. She studies it for only a moment before taking his hand in hers and planting a gentle kiss on the back of it. “You know the drill, kiddo. You can rest here for now if you want. If you decide to sleep I can wake you before the start of the next event.”

Izuku can feel the energy being drained out of him as the hero’s quirk works to heal his injuries. It leaves him feeling tired, but not as exhausted as he’d feared upon realizing he'd have to come see her. It makes sense, his current injuries can’t even compare to his near-death experience just weeks prior.

He rolls his shoulder, checking it for any catches, satisfied when he feels none.

He slides himself off the cot, testing his ankle as he pushes himself up. “I feel like sleeping will make me more tired,” Izuku chuckles.

She tucks a handful of gummies into his palm, folding his fingers around them. “Make sure you take these, they’ll help you recover some of your energy.” Her cool fingers don't linger and before he has time to thank her she’s already turned from him, shuffling through a cart of medical supplies without any real need.

“Of course.”

From the front of the tent Aizawa’s head peaks inside. “Recovery Girl,” his voice is muffled by the shroud of bandages encasing him, but he’s understandable nonetheless.

Izuku tenses as an instinctual response when his one visible eye lands on him before drifting back towards the older hero.

He steps inside.

“What is it?”

“One of the third-year business students got stepped on by a robot. They’re being brought over right now, they told me to give you a heads up.”

The woman clicks her tongue, scowling. “I told Nezu this would happen. How bad it is?”

“Don’t know.”

Izuku quickly eats the gummies he was given and begins to warily make his exit. He doesn’t want to be in the way if there were more injured people being brought in, and least of all he doesn’t want to be around Eraserhead more than required. He gives Recovery Girl a nod of thanks that she briefly acknowledges before he slips out the tent’s flap.

He’s greeted by bright sunlight and a call from behind.

“Midoriya,” Aizawa says, stopping him.

Izuku, caught off guard, turns around as the hero follows him out. Something like anxiety flares up in his chest. Izuku had been hoping that Piper’s body would turn up before the start of the sports festival. He had hoped that, when Izuku inevitably did something Piper-esque, that even people who may have originally made the connection between the two of them would be forced to remind themselves that the dead do not come back to life.

“Yes, Sensei?” He keeps his voice calm and his expression carefully curious.

“Mic was looking for you earlier. He wanted to let you know that *'you’re welcome to withdraw from the festival if you feel overwhelmed at any point’* .” Izuku gets the distinct impression that the words are being read off a teleprompter as his lips tick downwards.

“…people will underestimate you. Use that to your advantage.”

“He’s very considerate,” Izuku states, voice flat. “But I don’t have any plans on withdrawing.”

Aizawa studies him carefully before sighing, the tension that Izuku’s only just noticed melting from his shoulders. “I’ll let him know what you said.” He nods goodbye, turning back into the tent. “Good luck out there, kid.”

Luck? Luck was a fickle thing, relying on it will only ever get you killed. The only good it’s done for him in fifteen years was leave him unconscious on the steps of Reo’s fire escape. Even so, Izuku feels himself smile. “Thank you.”

With time still left before the start of the next event, Izuku grabs a snack from one of the street vendors and calls Inko to assure her that he's alright and has already been healed. He laughs sweetly as she cries, congratulating him on making it past the first round.

He disappears into the stadium's back tunnels as he finishes eating, eventually forced to hang up on his mother when the signal starts getting bad.

Re oh no 〉

Today 11:18 am

I lived bitch ✌

if u win u have to dab during the awards ceremony

Cashapp me 10 dollars rn and i'll dab

during the next round instead

absolutely not

on a completely unrelated note i need

to know what your cashapp is

Izuku grins down at his phone as he sidles up to Shinsou in 1-C's waiting room. He types out one more quick response before glancing around the room. Not including himself, only two other members of 1-C had advanced into the second round. At the moment, however, he and Shinsou are the only two in the room.

Izuku had missed his chance to speak with the boy after the end of the first event, lost in the crowd and riding through the last of his adrenaline, high off of advancing onto the next round. Izuku smiles at him now, falling into the chair next to him. "I thought it was all over for me when those robots started collapsing behind you. But looks like we both made it."

Shinsou turns to him, suspicion clear in the slight furrow of his brows.

"Something wrong?" Izuku asks, confusion dimming his smile.

The other boy studies him for a moment longer before shaking his head. “Nothing. Where’ve you been?”

“I had to go see Recovery Girl.”

“You alright?”

“Yeah, just tired now. Her quirk really takes it out of you.” Izuku lays his head on the table in front of them using his arm as a pillow as he looks at Shinsou. “Thank you.”

The other teen raises a single brow. “For what?”

“I wouldn’t have made it without your help. Getting out of that starting tunnel myself would’ve taken too long on my own. I barely made it as is,” Midoriya huffs.

“Whether you’re first or last, you still get to participate in the next round.”

“That’s true,” Izuku laughs. He stretches, yawning as he pushes himself back up. “If I sit much longer I feel like I might just fall asleep.”

“One less opponent for me.” Shinsou grins, slyly.

“I thought you said you didn’t mind the competition.”

The other shrugs. “I’ll be winning the next event either way.”

“Feeling cocky are we?”

“Losing’s never been an option.”

Midoriya pauses mid-stretch, smile wavering. The words remind him a bit too much of his previous self.

Above them, the intercom crackles to life. “Participants, please use the next five minutes to begin making your way to the starting tunnel. The second event will be beginning shortly.”

Izuku stares at the speaker system above them. “I have the sudden and desperate urge to use the bathroom right now.”

“You scared?” Shinsou teases.

“Of course,” Midoriya answers, eyes drifting towards his friend, “never

underestimate someone who's scared, Shinsou."

Hitoshi eyes him as he stands, making their way into the hall.

The walk to the starting tunnel is short, and when they get there at least half of the heroics department is already there. Izuku finds himself once again staring anxiously up at the red light on the ceiling as more students pile into the tunnel behind them.

Izuku managed to make it through the first third of the sports festival. He wonders if he'll survive the second. Present Mic's voice thrums through the tunnel. Above them, the light flashes green and the sea students shuffle forward in sync.

He quickly loses sight of Shinsou in the migration.

Izuku shields his eyes from the sun as they file outside. Midnight is waiting for them again, poised on the same stage as before. She welcomes them with a crack of her whip that both grabs their attention and silences the cheers of the crowd.

"After giving students a chance to relax and regain their energy we're finally back! Where the first event was focused on the survival of the fittest, the second round will be on teamwork!" The screen behind her flickers to life. "Your second event is! Home-defense! Participants will, on their own volition, form teams of three to five students. Once formed, each team will be tasked with guarding their 'home base' which will consist of a concrete pedestal that will house a small, terracotta replica of UA! Participants' goal is to keep their replica from being broken whilst trying to break other teams'! Once a team's replica is broken, while no longer eligible for advancement into the next round, participants are still able to sabotage other teams! Your replicas must remain on your pedestal! There is no time limit! There are no other rules! The last four teams remaining will move onto the final event! You have ten minutes to choose your teams! Get to it!"

Izuku is at somewhat of a loss after the announcement. He knew, on a subconscious level, that this event would likely be a team one. However, he'd failed to take into account the possibility of having to *pick* his teammates. He's never had such a luxury as a vigilante.

Shinsou finds him standing helpless amidst the crowd. "Midoriya," he calls out, "team up with me."

Izuku turns to him and nearly bursts into tears of relief.

Shinsou smirks at his reaction. “Did you think I wouldn’t want to team with you? You’re literally the only person here that I like.”

“You sure? You remember what I said earlier, right? I wouldn’t have made it this far without you.”

“I’m looking for a yes or no,” Shinsou replies instead.

Izuku's laugh is bright. “Yes.”

“So, I don’t guess we can strategically pick our teammates, huh? There’s not many people that are probably looking to work with gen ed. kids.”

There’s a long moment of contemplative silence from Shinsou where Izuku expects a quip of some kind. “I mean we could if you’d be up for it,” Hitoshi says with a forced casualness.

Before Midoriya can respond, someone calls Shinsou’s name from the crowd. They catch sight of Zheng Bao weaving her way through the sea of students. “I’m glad I found y’all, I was worried for a bit there. Do you two wanna work together?” Being the only three students from the general education department, their kind were outcasts in a field dominated by hero students.

Izuku and Shinsou share a look, speaking without need for words.

Their previous conversation is forgotten.

The three of them are in the middle of planning when their potential fourth member arrives.

“Excuse me.”

Midoriya doesn’t acknowledge the words at first, not realizing that they’re meant for him before they’re repeated again and a gentle hand taps at his shoulder.

Izuku startles, turning to find Iida standing just behind him.

“I don’t believe you heard me during the previous event, but I meant to thank you for your help earlier.” The boy’s hand cuts through the air in a swift chopping motion. “Although Recovery Girl is on-site to help should any accidents occur, you saved me from receiving any unnecessary injuries.”

Izuku takes a moment to gather himself from his initial surprise before he smiles at the boy genuinely. “It’s no problem,” Izuku states, shaking the hand that’s offered to him. “I’m Midoriya Izuku,” he greets, “1-C.”

“Iida Tenya, vice representative of 1-A.”

Behind him, Shinsou’s brow twitches upwards in amusement.

“If you don’t mind,” Iida says, adjusting his glasses. “Would you care if I joined your team?”

Izuku’s eyes widen in surprise. “Our team?” He asks uncertainly, confused as to why someone from 1-A would be approaching three gen ed. students for an alliance.

“Yes,” Iida confirms, “You proved yourself to be capable in the first event. You took notice of what I failed to and risked your safety for that of someone else.”

Izuku looks at Shinsou in bewilderment. The other teen only grins, shrugging nonchalantly. “I, for one, think you’d be a *great* addition to the team,” Shinsou drawls.

He glances at Zheng who looks just as confused as he is.

They would have to be stupid not to accept the help of a hero course student looking to work with them. Izuku’s smile is somewhat nervous-looking, but he extends his hand nonetheless. “We’d love to have you.”

Iida pushes his glasses back up the ridge of his nose from where they’d fallen, shaking his hand. “I look forward to working with the three of you.”

Even if the boy is only working with Izuku out of a sense of duty or a desire to repay his favor, Midoriya will not question it. Izuku has been anticipating a grueling battle for the second event. But, with a hero student on their side, their chances of winning have increased tenfold. His mind whirls with all the new strategies for survival. Things have just gotten much easier for them.

“Okay,” Izuku starts, “It’s probably best if we introduce ourselves. Once we–”

“Iida.”

Everyone's heads turn to find the source of the voice, or, in this case, the distinct lack thereof.

"Hagakure," Iida greets, "What can I do for you?"

Although he can't see it, he gets the sense that the girl's head tilts curiously to the side. "Do you guys still need a partner? A lot of the other teams have already filled up."

"Although I cannot speak for the others, I believe you'd be a strong asset."

"You're in the hero course too?" Zheng asks, eyeing her carefully.

"We're in the same class," Iida confirms. "I can vouch for her abilities."

Izuku, Shinsou, and Zheng all share a look and Midoriya feels a warm grin rising on his lips. He turns back to the girl. "Welcome to the team."

"I guess we'll start with quirks then. As I was saying earlier, if we want to formulate a plan that'll help us win we'll need to know as much about each other's strengths and weaknesses as possible," Midoriya starts. He can feel the ball of nerves churn inside his chest, writhing against his ribs in hopes of escaping. He pushes them down, hardening his resolve. This was a necessary step towards making it to the third event.

Iida begins explaining his quirk followed by Hagakure and Zheng, who explains that she's able to produce a strong adhesive from her skin. When Izuku sees Shinsou hesitate when his unspoken turn comes, Izuku steps up in his place. He squares himself, keeps his posture relaxed and tone light, but there's an unwavering determination that hardens in his eyes. "I'm quirkless," he states firmly, ignoring the surprise that rolls through the small group. "However, I'm skilled in martial arts and well versed in things like tactical strategies and quirk analysis."

Zheng looks as if she's about to speak before Shinsou cuts in.

"Brainwash," he states suddenly. "My quirk is Brainwash. If I can get someone to respond verbally to me I can control them for an indefinite period of time. A strong enough physical jolt can forcibly

cancel it out though.”

Izuku blinks at him in surprise before a grin lights up his face. The ball of nerves in his chest unravels. “To think,” Izuku laughs, “you could get anyone on your team and yet you still asked me if I wanted to join you.”

Izuku watches as a similar ball of nerves unwinds in Shinsou's chest, the tension sliding from his shoulders.

“I remember how you reacted during the security breach on the third day of school,” Shinsou reminds him. “You were the only one out of just about everybody that remained calm and tried to figure out what was happening instead of just blindly rushing after the crowd like I was ready to do. I trust you.”

Izuku gives a single, determined nod. He glances up at the timer slowly counting down on the screen behind Midnight. There’s no time to waste.

“We need a plan before the round starts, so if you have any ideas let me know. But, to start with I want to point out that most people will probably be focused on defense. In a team of five, it’s likely for them to send out one to two people to attack while the others defend their replica. However, if they’re smart, that plan will extend only until the first one or two teams are knocked out. Once teams start going down there won’t be anything for the people who got out to defend so they’ll put all their manpower into attacking. That means a lot of teams will be most vulnerable during the starting period.”

“What about teams with powerhouses like Todoroki and Bakugou though?” Hagakure asks. “They’re basically full teams all on their own.”

“Indeed,” Iida says, pushing his glasses back up. “Having sparred with them in class I can confirm such sentiment.”

“From what I’ve seen of Todoroki, you’re right. Even so, his team is likely to focus solely on defense. They’ve got the advantage in this situation, the game isn’t point based so all they have to do is make sure their replica isn’t broken and with Todoroki’s quirk, I’m assuming it’ll be easy. Realistically speaking they’ll probably be one of the last teams. Bakugou however, is more likely to focus on attacking and leave the defense to his team the entire round. And that,” Izuku states, eyes trailing towards where he can see the boy’s team, “will leave them with three people on defense.”

Hagakure laughs, “That does sound like him actually.”

“Are you familiar with Bakugou, Midoriya-kun?”

“You could say that,” Izuku huffs, “We’ve been in the same class since preschool.”

Hagakure takes on a serious air. “I’m so sorry for your loss,” she states with a mock-solemnity.

Iida looks between the two of them in confusion. “Why are you offering your condolences?”

Izuku does his best to suppress a laugh as he continues. “Now, we could easily focus on defense alone and keep everyone at the base. Given our combined skills, we’d probably make it pretty far if we leave the other teams to attack. However, it’s unlikely we’ll survive long enough to be one of the final four teams. So, I have an idea, but first, Hagakure. I have a question about your quirk-”

Around them ten pillars rise from the ground, dragging up dust. There’s eleven in total, representative of the total number of teams that’ll be participating. By the end of this event, only four will remain.

The terracotta replicas are smaller than he anticipated.

He glances at Hagakure, that’s good news for them.

“Choose a pedestal! Take your places!”

Midoriya guides them to a pillar wedged in the corner of the field that’ll be easier for defense.

For his plan to work, Iida’s speed will be integral to the success of their plan. But, stealth would be just as much of a key component.

“Iida, you’ll have to be as quick as you can, go for the team that looks the easiest. Hagakure, make sure you follow after him. Try not to get caught. Shinsou, Zheng, and I will play defense until you get back. None of the teams should be launching any full force attacks so early on in the game so we’ll be fine until you get back.”

There’s a resounding crack of a whip from Midnight. “The round starts now!”

Iida doesn't hesitate, taking off like a bullet, racing towards one of the neighboring pedestals. His movement sets off a chain reaction and before the end of the first minute chaos has already erupted across the field.

The first person that tries approaching their pedestal gets turned away by Shinsou's quirk, instructed to go back and break their own replica.

Izuku smiles.

With this plan, they'll win.

Before the first five minutes of the second event is up, there's shards of broken terracotta scattering the base of their pillar.

Hagakure is leaned over the top of the pedestal, head in her hands. Zheng sits in front of her, head leaned back defeat. To their right Shinsou paces, fingers tugging at his hair.

Midoriya puts a gentle hand on his shoulder, steering him away from the wreckage. "Let's finish this."

"We're barely five minutes into the match and already three of our teams have fallen! This event is moving quickly folks! Who will be the next team to fall!"

The rule that allowed disqualified players to continue attacking opposing teams was a good way to ensure that the match wouldn't become a defensive stand-off between remaining teams. And although it was encouraged, it wasn't required of you to continue participating.

They pass several people sprawled out around their empty pedestals similar to how they'd left Zheng and Hagakure. To them, there was nothing left to prove. They'd given up.

Midoriya, however, was not one to give up in the face of failure.

"Bakugou! If you stay here it'll be easy for us to win, come on man!"

"I don't care shittyhair! Take care of it!" He growls, blasting himself airborne. "There's a reason I agreed to let you team with me!" His eyes rake over the mass of students, looking for one particularly

nauseating shade of green.

“1-A’s Todoroki has raised the ultimate ice barrier! Both cutting off his opponents and trapping his teammates inside! 1-B’s Shiozaki follows suit with a barrier of thorny vines! The supreme defense against anyone trying to make a quick grab at their replicas! And– Oh? What’s this! It appears 1-C’s Midoriya is dabbing on the haters!”

“Mid battle?”

“Indeed! Keep it up little listener!”

“Why the hell are you dabbing!” Shinsou shouts.

“Reo cashapped me 10 bucks!” Izuku laughs over the crowd, slipping through the guard of one preoccupied team. He uses a high kick to break their replica, watching with a grin as it shatters beneath his heel.

“Shit! Tsuburaba, they got it!”

“Sorry ‘bout that!” Midoriya calls over his shoulder.

They let out a low groan. “Tokage’s gonna be pissed.”

“And team Tokage bites the dust courtesy of 1-C’s Midoriya!”

Midoriya’s already making his way towards the next pillar when his head jerks to the sky at the sound of crackling explosions overhead.

“Found you! *Deku!”*

Izkuk prepares himself, rolling out of the way as Bakugou lands where he’d just been.

“I don’t know what kid you leeched off of to get through that maze,” Bakugou growls, “But don’t you dare think for a moment that I missed your little *‘declaration of war* ’ earlier. What was it you said again? *‘You’ll lose’, right?”*

Midoriya curses. He’d known there was a possibility of Katsuki tracking him down after Izuku’s short outburst before the beginning of the first event. That, however, didn’t mean he was prepared to fight

the boy one-on-one.

Izuku ducks past his right swing. He needs to disappear. If he gets hurt badly enough here then even if his team wins Midoriya won't be able to participate in the final event. He feels at his waist for smoke bombs that he no longer owns in panic. It creates an opening long enough for Bakugou to squeeze through his defenses.

Katsuki's hand extends out towards him, the barest hint of flash fire flaring across his open palm.

In that moment Midoriya feels nothing but terror.

He sees Overhaul in that hand, sees the monster from the USJ, sees Naomasa trying to coax him into giving up.

Bakugou had saved him once, saved him from the woman intent on burning a hole in his neck. Bakugou had saved him. He'd saved him. And yet, that moment was not enough to erase the eleven years of torment inflicted on him. Just as the scars spanning his rib cage would never fade, neither would the stippling of burn marks dusting his skin like freckles.

Shinsou's voice rises over the crowd. "Hey, Baku-bitch!"

Katsuki's head snaps up, pausing mid-attack. His red eyes are lit like fire. "The fuck did you just say to me!?"

Shinsou's voice goes flat. "I said go destroy as many replicas as you can."

Midoriya watches the boy's eyes glaze over, expression slipping from his face.

Izuku's legs collapse beneath him.

Bakugou stalks off like a zombie and Shinsou rushes to take his place.

"You okay?" he asks, crouching to speak with him. "Can you stand?" Shinsou helps him back to his feet, using himself as a sort of crutch. "Did you get hurt?"

"No."

The other boy goes silent for a moment before turning them around. "Let's get you back to the others. You can take a break once we get there."

Izuku shakes his head, forcing himself to pull away from the other. “If he snaps out of it he could come looking for either of us. And with him being classmates with Hagakure I doubt it would take much for him to realize something’s up.”

Shinsou studies him for a moment before nodding reluctantly.

“It’s getting close to the final few teams though, so it’s best if we stick closer to the base,” Izuku adds. He does what he can to clear his head, calm his thoughts. He’s used to this.

Facing his lingering trauma can wait until after the festival’s over.

“You’re right. There should be enough people attacking as is, it’s only a matter of time before the game ends.”

“And 1-A’s Bakugou decimates team Shouji’s replica! Killing their chances of advancing! As quickly as it began our second event is already almost at its close! Only six teams remain!”

Izuku and Shinsou hover a good fifteen feet away from their pillar, trying their best to look like they’re part of the defeated neighboring team. No one pays them any mind.

Izuku’s still shaken a bit, with there being no immediate threat, he’s taking longer than usual to rid himself of the fear lingering in his chest.

“I was a little skeptical of your plan at first, you know?” Shinsou tells him, carefully eyeing the chaos around them. “It relied on a bit more ‘ifs’ than I was comfortable with.”

Izuku sighs. “That’s understandable. I would've been worried about it as well if the situations were reversed.”

“I meant what I said earlier though,” Shinsou states, “I trust you, and I’m glad that I did. I still don’t know how you managed to come up with all of this so quickly though.”

Izuku flushes. “I just thought it made the most sense.”

“1-A’s Bakugou is on fire! Taking out yet another replica! But, the real question is how much longer will his team be able to last without him there?”

Kirishima hardens himself, shielding their replica against a series of projectiles that bounce off his arms and chest.

“Midnight Sensei!” Mina whines, “Why haven’t you called an end to the event yet!” She throws out another bath of acid on the ground around their pillar, keeping their attackers at bay. “There’s only four teams left but we’re still having to fight everyone off!”

“What do you mean!” The hero grins, laughing heartily. “There’s obviously still five teams left!”

“Why did Kaminari have to abandon us for Todoroki!” Mina bemoans.

“I know we’re bad at math, but there’s definitely only four teams, Sensei!” Sero shouts.

The hero cracks her whip in Iida’s direction. “Did you not realize that Team Iida is still in the game?!” Her laughter echoes across the field.

Midoriya finds himself anxiously stepping back towards their pedestal at the words, Bakugou be damned.

“What do we do?” Hagakure stage-whispers at them from where she’s still awkwardly poised over their pedestal. “They weren’t supposed to find out.” There’s a hint of panic in her voice.

“I figured there was a chance we might be outed if we made it this far,” Izuku whispers back, taking a more relaxed yet defensive stance. “But since Midnight didn’t point at us directly, we might still be okay. Not everyone will know who Iida is let alone which team he’s a part of as long as he stays away.” He locks eyes with the teen through the crowd. Izuku does his best to communicate two words to the other non-verbally. *“Finish it.”*

Within seconds Iida is back to trying to get a hit in on one of the remaining replicas. Half of the crowd is looking around in bewilderment, searching for Iida’s ghost team whilst the other half has yet to stop their attacks.

“Thankfully a majority of the people who might know what team Iida’s on are busy playing defense.” He glances down to where Zheng is still sitting. “Your glue traps are still in place just in case, right?”

The girl nods anxiously. “We haven’t needed to use them yet, so…”

He looks back at Hagakure. Really, she was one of the only reasons they’d been able to make it this far to begin with. From this angle, he can just see the barest hint of their intact replica peeking between the gaps in her arms.

Hagakure groans. “I think I’m getting a headache, this takes so much concentration.”

“You said this was your first time trying to turn something invisible so that’s understandable. It’s almost over though, you just have to hang in there a bit longer.”

“Aye, aye captain,” she sighs.

“1-A’s Iida comes mere inches from taking out team Kendo’s replica! Oof! There goes Bakugou! Brutally batted away by 1-B’s Kendo herself before he can even get near their pedestal! That’s gotta hurt! And— Bakugou seems dazed! Is he–? Oh! He’s redirecting his efforts! He’s going straight for team Iida’s base! Has he figured out their ploy? Make sure you’re watching closely folks!”

After Hagakure had returned with the broken pieces of the replica Iida had destroyed at the start of the round they were set. Unless something went wrong they wouldn’t need to focus at all on the defense of their ‘base’ until the end of the round.

The plan was easy, too easy. But, it’d worked flawlessly, keeping their team in the running without needing to fend off any of the attackers that the other teams were dealing with. That is until Bakugou gets forcibly *‘awoken’* and his anger returns in full force.

He’s airborne, having crossed half the field before Midoriya even has time to realize he’s broken out of Shinsou’s quirk. He barrels into Shinsou's chest with all the force of a bullet, sending him to the ground in a cloud of dust. He has a foot planted on the boy’s ribcage, pinning him to the ground.

His palms crackle menacingly.

Izuku sees red.

Zheng leaps from her spot, grabbing the back of Bakugou’s uniform to

try and dislodge the teen to no avail. “Get off him!”

While he’s busy trying to shake Zheng off, Izuku stalks over, anger boiling like molten lava in his stomach. Izuku pulls his arm back and punches Bakugou in the face as hard as he can.

It’s a satisfying feeling, watching his childhood bully stumble off his friend from the force of the blow. He brings a hand up to his cheek in disbelief as he turns slowly towards Izuku. There’s a cold, calm fury in his crimson eyes.

“Deku.”

That’s when all hell breaks loose.

Bakugou lunges at him and Hagakure and Zheng are both yelling and Shinsou is still on the ground trying to recover his breath and Izuku desperately wants to check on him and make sure Katsuki hasn’t broken one of the boy’s ribs because he knows just what those can do to you now but Bakugou is in his face and his hands are searing through the front of his shirt where he’s grabbed Izuku by the collar and Zheng is trying to pull Katsuki off of him by the back of his uniform, gluing herself to both him and the ground and pulling as hard as she can and now Hagakure is pulling away from their replica, exposing it to the others and Izuku wants to tell her to stop, go back before anyone has a chance to see it and—

“1-A’s Iida has broken the final replica! Team Todoroki, Bakugou, Shiozaki, and Iida move onto our final event! You’ve fought long and hard, little listeners! Congratulations!”

“Bakugou!” Midnight’s voice echoes over the field. “Release him. Continued physical aggression after the end of the match will result in immediate disqualification from the rest of the festival.”

Katsuki hangs onto his collar for several more long moments before finally releasing him with a light shove. He doesn't, however, break eye contact with Izuku.

For the first time in his entire career as a vigilante, Izuku wonders why he’d chosen red contacts for his disguise.

Chapter End Notes

YOOOOOOO ANOTHER NEW CHAPTER??? ONLY A WEEK LATER!!!?? POG

This chapter was so much fun to write and I can't wait to show you guys what happens next! Also!!! We've officially hit 200k words on Piper which!! Is so cool and I'm honestly really proud of myself!! Thank you all for sticking around for so long through everything! Until next time!!

The Big Bang

Chapter Notes

TW :// implied gore , death

the implied gore will be split into smaller sections that are separated portions by news coverage, to make this easily identifiable I've italicized the parts with implied gore. If you want to skip these sections feel free to scroll past them, the most important details are covered in the non-italicized sections in a more news-friendly way.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Art!!!!

poika (picrew design)

taztaztaz-blog x x

fretful-ferret x x x x x x x x x

April 29, 2232

12:23 PM

Midoriya finds himself stationed outside of Recovery Girl's tent again, this time waiting for news on Shinsou. UA has a few recreational games going on before the start of the final event and Izuku can hear the cheers of the stadium from here. He runs his thumb over his bruised knuckles, flexing his fingers, soaking in the ache. He doesn't think he's ever legitimately punched anyone barehanded before.

Izuku looks up at the sound of the tent flap opening. Recovery Girl stands at the entrance, cane stationed between her hands. "I was wondering when you'd drop by," she calls as Midoriya stands, walking towards her. "Bakugou was dragged in earlier by some of his classmates. He seemed intent on not letting me heal him," she huffs, turning to head back inside as Izuku follows her silently into the tent.

Midoriya's eyes immediately find Shinsou. He's asleep in one of the

beds towards the back of the tent, totally unaware of what's happening around him. He looks peaceful.

"A friend of yours?" Recovery Girl asks, taking immediate notice of his sudden hesitance and glancing between the two.

"Yeah," Midoriya confirms. "Did he break anything?"

She shakes her head. "Just a bit of bruising, he's lucky that's all he came away with."

"You make it sound like it's his fault." Izuku does not turn to her. He does not take his eyes off Shinsou.

The heroine studies him for a long, quiet moment before busying herself with the clipboard in her hand. She does not say anything in response.

"Will he be able to participate in the finals?" Izuku asks, changing the topic.

"That's up to him," Recovery Girl responds. "Physically he's fine, but the fact that he fell asleep immediately after healing him tells me he was already tired before the start of the festival."

Midoriya nods grimly in understanding.

She motions for Izuku to take a seat on one of the empty beds. He looks at her in confusion until she points at his bruised knuckles. He looks down at them a little blankly. "Take a seat Midoriya."

He does as he's asked.

Recovery Girl takes his injured hand in hers, studying the damage. "Is this the worst of it?"

Midoriya nods, watching as she presses her lips to the back of his hand. Soon enough the ache in his knuckles has faded entirely. He stares at them almost mournfully when she lets go. The physical mark of the anger Bakugou had manifested in him has been erased.

She tucks another handful of gummies in his hand.

"If you're not hurt, they'll be holding a short ceremony soon to announce the next event. I assume you'll want to be there."

"Are you telling me to get out?" Izuku chuckles absently.

“Would saying yes mean making sure you get there on time?” she quips back at him.

Izuku slips off the bed, bowing. “I’ll see myself out then.”

“Try not to get hurt in the next event,” Recovery Girl warns him. “Even though you’re fully healed I was against you participating in something as intensive as this blasted sports festival. However, I cleared you for it when Present Mic came around asking if you’d be okay because you don’t seem the type to back down from a challenge like this. You might be fully healed, but realistically you lost quite a bit of muscle mass after being on bed rest for so long.”

Izuku shrugs. “Like you said, I’m not one to back down so easily. I’ve been through a lot more than kids my age should probably go through, but I’ve never let it hold me back for too long.”

The heroine turns from him where he can't see her expression. “If you don’t go now, you’ll miss the announcement.”

Midoriya misses the announcement anyway.

Of the students advancing to the next event, he was the last to arrive and had rounded the corner and come face to face with the back of Bakugou’s head and had immediately turned right back around in favor of being nowhere within close proximity to him.

Izuku sighs, leaning his back against the wall, listening as Present Mic’s voice reverberates down the hall.

After landing that punch Midoirya wasn’t scared of Bakugou anymore, at least, not in the sense that he used to be. Bakugou is powerful, his quirk would allow him to save thousands. He has the potential to become one of the best heroes of their generation. Izuku used to look up to him because of that power he wielded, because of that potential.

Watching him barrel into Shinsou’s chest had dispelled that glamour, shattering it like thin glass. Bakugou’s path was paved in privilege and gold. He was born powerful and has the potential to become the hero Midoriya has always wanted to be. Even so, Bakugou Katsuki is nothing more than a bully.

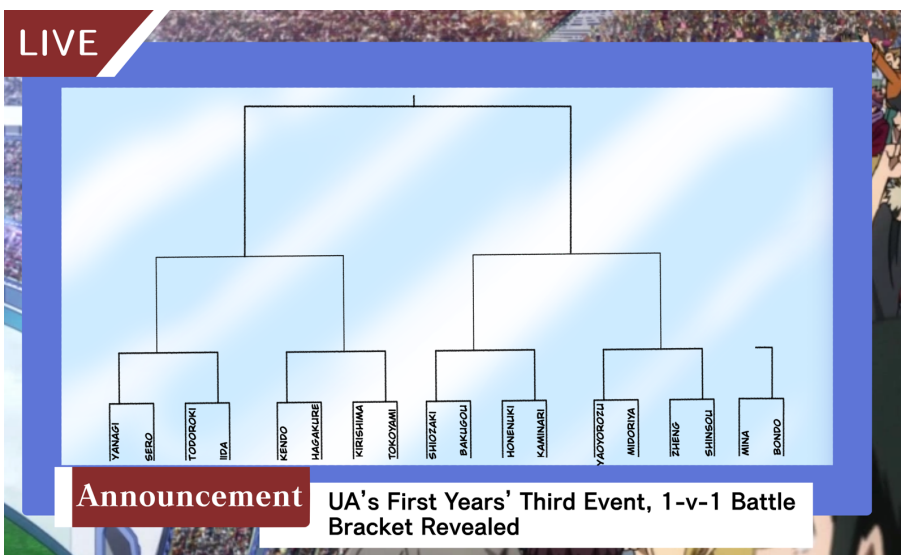
Izuku has known this, he’s been aware of it since the age of four when his quirk failed to appear. But Izuku, just like everyone else, found

himself overlooking this detail in favor of seeing Katsuki succeed in the future. That first punch, fueled with the remainder of Izuku's strength and suppressed anger, shattered those past ideals.

Red, to him, was no longer the color of power.

The cheers from the crowd echoes loudly down the hall. And the shuffling of feet tells him the group has been called, but Midoriya stays where he is. The roar of the audience grows as they exit.

Izuku opts to pull the broadcast up on his phone. He cranks the volume up, watching as the camera pans across the remaining students before resting on Midnight. “It’s what you’ve all been waiting for! The announcement of the final event!” A graphic overlay appears on screen, obscuring the shot of the stadium. The event title flashes on his screen. Midnight’s voice crackles through his speaker, “One-v-one solo battles between the members of our four qualifying teams! And these–” the hero pauses dramatically, “are the matchups!”



An event bracket appears, taking up the whole of his screen. There’s a total of eighteen contestants, it’s an uneven number as far as the bracket goes, two too many people to have a proper one. There’s a total of ten students from 1-A, five from 1-B, and a surprising three from 1-C. With two powerhouses taking up residence in 1-A he’s not surprised to see how imbalanced the numbers are from each class.

He anxiously skims the bracket for familiar names.

Iida has been matched up against Todoroki, and Hagakure is set to

fight someone by the name of Kendo from 1-B. Yaoyorozu, whose name barely fits on the bracket, is the person Midoriya himself is set to go against. He grimaces on instinct upon seeing Shinsou, whose name he finds towards the tail end of the bracket, paired against Zheng.

When the noise in the stadium begins to die down he takes a quick screenshot of the bracket and heads back towards Recovery Girl's tent where he can wait for Shinsou to wake up. The heroine raises a brow to see him back so soon, but doesn't comment on his return as he takes a seat next to Shinsou's bed.

Re oh no 〉

Today 12:39 pm

YOU MADE IT

YOU

YOU MADE IT

I JUST REWATCHED THE–

YOU MADE ME THINK—

i hate u why would u do this to me

im so hurt

I THOUGHT YOU LOST

for you to have so little faith in me 😔

Izuku only leaves the tent twice while Shinsou's sleeping. Once to use the bathroom and the second time to meet up with Reo to have a look

at all the festival booths that have been set up around the stadium.

Reo hugs him the moment they spot each other. Words of congratulation flood out in excitement and Izuku feeds off his energy, smiling and laughing and explaining how he'd come up with the plan that'd won them the second event. They stick their tongues out at Death Arms as he passes on patrol and hop from booth to booth looking at this or that and buying snacks from the food stalls that draw their eyes. They talk and wander even as the first match starts and they watch from one of the big screens as two hero students face off in a fight that eventually ends up with the student from 1-A tangled in his own tape.

"Are you nervous?" Reo asks as they watch several people enter the arena to help untangle the boy before the start of the next round.

"Obviously," Izuku sighs, "If I want to win I'll be going up against some monsters power-wise."

"...Piper… is used to fighting people like that though, isn't he?" he asks hesitantly.

Izuku pauses for a moment, realizing what the boy was implying. "...Not really. A lot of these guys have flashy, powerhouse quirks. Villains with flashy quirks like that don't usually keep a low enough profile to be dealt with by people like Piper."

Reo lets out a hum of understanding.

"What do you think you'll do then?" Reo asks.

"My best."

Reo glances at him briefly from the corner of his eye before looking back at the screen where they've almost finished untangling the hero student.

"Winning the festival is the easiest path to becoming a hero. It's not the only one though," Izuku reminds him.

"You'll still be disappointed though."

"Of course."

"I'm proud of you," Reo says suddenly, "You've come a long way from that guy I found napping on my fire escape." He pulls Izuku into a

side hug, watching as the boy on screen is escorted off the field.

“I fell from the roof,” Midoriya whines, poking him in the side, “Give me a break.”

“Maybe it’s a little cruel of me,” his friend laughs. “but I’m glad it happened the way it did.” It’s a gentle laugh, as warm as sunshine and as airy as the breeze at their backs.

“You know,” Izuku smiles, “as much as I dislike Death Arms he’s the only reason I came back.”

Reo snorts. “I never thought about that way, but now I kind of feel bad about leaking that photo of him mid-sneeze.”

“You what,” Izuku chokes, pulling out of the hug to gawk at his friend.

Reo holds his hands up. “Nothing, nothing, I don’t know what you’re talking about. I did no such thing.”

“That photo has been circling social media for weeks!” Izuku laughs in disbelief. “I literally saw someone on Twitter use it as a reaction image last night!”

Reo bursts into laughter at that, clutching at his stomach. “Maybe I don’t feel that bad,” he cackles.

Cal || 🎰

@cawemybeloved

no no no no no no no this isn’t real you’ve gotta be fucking with me, i know i didn’t just hear that with my own ears i know it wtf wtf wtf please no please dont be real im begging you please please please please

1:13 PM · 4/29/32 · Twitter for Phone

1 Retweet **11** Likes

Taz (derogatory) @taztaztazz · 5m

Replying to @**cawemybeloved**

you okay??

Meerkat tbh @meer_kat · 3m

Replying to @**cawemybeloved**

what happened?

□□□ @droppedmycake · 2m

Replying to @**cawemybeloved**

huh???? context please?

Ferret (◕ㅗ◕✿)🖉 @fewwet · 43s

Replying to @**cawemybeloved**

Hey if you need to talk let me know,

my dms are always open ✿

Midoriya returns to the medical tent shortly after he parts with Reo after he explains he's going to find a seat in the stadium so he can watch their matches. When he gets back Shinsou is still fast asleep. He settles back into his chair from before, pulling out his phone to watch the rest of Iida's fight against Todoroki only to find his previous teammate slowly being thawed out of an iceberg that reaches out into the stands.

Izuku winces, questioning how he'd even begin to fight against someone with such a powerful quirk in their arsenal. He'll have to give Iida a good pat on the back next time he sees him.

Shinsou makes a quiet rustling noise beside him and when Izuku glances over at the boy he finds him staring at back blearily. "We won?" he croaks.

Izuku smiles. "Yeah, we won."

Shinsou pushes himself up, accepting the glass of water that the other offers him. He takes a few sips before speaking again. “What did I miss?”

“Well, they’ve announced that we’re competing in one-v-one battles.”

“Anything else?” he asks groggily.

“There’s been two matches so far. Someone from 1-B beat out a 1-A student in the first round and in the second one Iida got turned into an icicle. Your match is towards the tail end of all of them so you can rest a bit more until then.”

“Do they have a list of matchups?”

Midoriya nods, handing off his phone where an updated digital bracket has been uploaded to the school’s website.

“Guess I’ll be fighting Zheng then.”

Izuku remains silent.

“And,” Shinsou trails off, “you, if we both win our matches.” Hitoshi sighs. “I expect you to go all out against me.”

Midoriya glances at him from the corner of his eye.

“We’re both aiming for the top,” Shinsou chuckles dryly, “Of course we’d be fighting each other at some point. You should be more worried about beating this hero student you’re fighting first before you start overthinking our match.”

The two of them watch the next few matches together on their phones, watching as Hagakure gets pushed out of bounds by a girl with hands the size of Midoriya himself. Kirishima meets a fate similar to that of Hagakure’s. His match lasts longer, but he ultimately gets flung gracelessly into the stadium wall by the shadowy creature that is Tokoyami’s quirk.

When Bakugou’s turn is announced Izuku stands to leave. His own match would be starting soon enough.

“Win for me,” Shinsou tells him before he gets a chance to leave. “I’m looking forward to our fight, so you have to win for me.”

Izuku attempts a smile. “Well, I certainly don’t plan on losing.”

April 29, 2232

1:58 PM

“Before continuing our coverage of UA’s sports festival, we, as a station dedicated to bringing you the hero news no one else will, want our audience to be aware of what’s happening in *your* neighborhood. Please be advised that the topics covered in this next segment are sensitive ones and may be triggering to certain audiences. Viewer discretion is advised.”

April 26, 2232

2:46 AM

Shimeka*, Izuku thinks,* is a fitting name. *The process of watching a body being built before him is disgustingly fascinating. He’s watching as his own corpse is created. He, Giran, and Shimeka are completely silent for a good half an hour or more, the start of the process requiring more concentration than the last half.*

“It’s alright to speak now,” Shimeka says eventually, opening his eyes for the first time since he started. He looks up at them. “We can begin discussing the details.”

Izuku nods. “DNA wise I guess there’s no helping it,” he explains cautiously, “but I still can't have this body traced back to me in any form. My face can’t be recognized,” he states, more confident now. He pauses for a moment to think, remembering how Giran had said that it would decay just like any other body. “Is it possible to leave it in the ocean for a few days before you let it wash up somewhere?”

“Given our proximity to the ocean that’s a frequently requested process,” Shimeka replies, tiredly watching the boy over the rim of his glasses. “It’s very doable.”

Izuku nods, meeting the man’s eyes. “Good.”

“In the midst of UA’s annual sports festival, Musutafu’s Chief of Police has released a major update on the case of the vigilante Pied Piper. Early this morning a body was discovered on the shore of Dagobah beach. Police, while still in the process of identifying the remains,

have confirmed that the victim's personal effects seem to belong to that of Pied Piper."

"Any major scars need to be taken care of. The ones on the neck and ribs especially, they're too memorable."

Shimeka nods quietly. "Of course. I can try fabricating a few fake identifiable ones if you want. I'm not too experienced at it though since most people are looking for exact copies."

"If you can that'd be preferable," Izuku agrees, "The body still needs to look beaten to hell though. I broke a bunch of ribs and almost died, you know?" He huffs out a sardonic half-laugh, "Well, I guess I did, didn't I?" He pauses for a moment thinking as he stares at the steadily forming corpse. He grimaces, "And the teeth. You have to take the teeth."

"Medical examiners have stated that the dental records were inconclusive. But, what identifiable features remain match up with what police know of Piper. Many of the wounds found also correspond with injuries that the vigilante is suspected to have sustained at the USJ attack several weeks ago now."

"What exactly do you want the story to be?" Giran asks, eyeing the boy from his spot by the wall. There's a lit cigarette between his fingers and he takes a careful drag of it before continuing. "Everything we do to the body will be scrutinized by the police."

Izuku glances back at him, wrinkling his nose as the smoke drifts towards the folding chair he's been stationed at for the last hour. "There's lots of people out there that want to do more than simply kill me," Izuku explains. He stares at the body, his body, *thinking about things no kid his age should ever have to think of.*

This will be the last time.

He turns away with a grimace. "The eyes too… they can't stay.".

"We will now show a short clip of the press conference that Musutafu's chief of police held earlier today discussing the discovery. Ahane, if you will?"

The station footage cuts, expertly replaced by press coverage of the conference. The video zooms in on the face of an older man, deep

wrinkles cut rough lines beside his eyes and across his forehead. He pats at his face with a handkerchief.

“As many of you know, the vigilante Pied Piper was someone with many enemies. Although the investigation behind the vigilante’s death is still ongoing, it is believed that after escaping the USJ in a heavily injured state that he was intercepted by an individual or group that would detain and eventually kill him.”

“I can't have anyone so much as question the legitimacy of Piper's death, but, like I said, I also can't have any of this lead back to me.” Midoriya’s eyes trail the full length of the body, pausing where he can just see the feet beginning to form. “The pinky toes,” he murmurs, just barely loud enough for the other two to hear, “Is there a way you can fuse the first two bones in them?”

Shimeka raises a brow but says nothing against it. He looks thinner than before, an assumable side effect of his quirk. “That’s not the most unusual request I’ve had,” is all he responds with.

“It is suspected that Piper was held captive for a prolonged period of time before his death. And while the main cause of death has yet to be determined, the ongoing autopsy has concluded that a majority of the wounds Piper sustained were obtained postmortem. While investigators familiar with Pied Piper’s case can confirm that the body belongs to that of the vigilante, we are still working tirelessly to uncover the civilian identity of Piper. Our officers are also heading an investigation to find and capture the ones responsible for his death. People like this can’t be left on the streets. If you or someone you know has any information that you feel may be useful to the investigation, we have a 24-hour hotline set up—”

Bakugou of course wins his match, even paired against another powerhouse like Shiozaki, he stands no chance of losing. Izuku paces the room that’s been reserved for him, refusing to look at his phone, impatiently waiting for the intercom above him to crackle to life and proclaim that the chopping block was in place and his executioner was on standby. He does his best to shake off his fear, to swallow his anxiety. *There are other ways,* he reminds himself. He says it over and over again in his head, trying to drown out the voices chanting that this is his last chance because for so long it *had been.* UA *used* to be his only chance.

He shakes his limbs out, jogging in place. The muffled roar of the stadium thrums through his bones, sings in his skull.

A voice crackles through the speaker above him. “Midoriya Izuku please make your way to tunnel A for standby. Midoriya Izuku please make your way to tunnel A for standby.”

He releases a shaky breath.

He can do this.

Midoriya instantly regrets not taking Reo up on his offer for the ‘black market’ info the business department was ‘selling’. Standing face to face with his current opponent, he can see now where the information would’ve come in handy. After watching one of the 1-A students getting carried out on a stretcher from the last round he realizes that, whether it felt like cheating or not, Izuku could use all the help he could get.

He’d been too set on the fact that Piper had constantly worked with little information when it comes to fighting criminals.

Present Mic’s voice booms throughout the stadium. “All-purpose creation! She was admitted through recommendation, so her skills are certified! From the hero course, it’s Yaoyorozu Momo!” The crowd roars with an excitement that reverberates through him. “Versus— The guy that fooled even the audience with his strategy in the second event! From general education, it’s Midoriya Izuku!” He looks up at the sound of his name, finding Reo in the stands, cheering him on.

Izuku steels himself, wind ruffling his bangs, scars all the more visible beneath the sun.

Midnight’s whip cracks. “Match Eight! Start!”

Izuku immediately takes the defensive. With as many unknowns as he’s facing rushing in could be dangerous. He keeps his stance, waiting for his opponent to make the first move. He eyes her carefully for any abnormal movement.

The girl, Yaoyorozu, gives off the air of an athlete, but she doesn’t look necessarily strong.

The look on her face is grim, determined, *nervous.*

Izuku takes his first step forward.

A gentle shine starts up along the exposed parts of her arms, sparking with bright blue and fuschia. He thinks he's seeing things at first, thinks that the stadium lighting is finally getting to him. But, when a heavy smoke begins curling out of the shimmering sections of skin Izuku realizes it's the work of a quirk.

"And Yaoyorozu becomes the first to make a move, summoning a smokescreen to cut off Midoriya's line of sight! How will he handle low visibility?"

To Izuku, being enveloped by the white haze is more comforting than it is intimidating. It's true that while he can't see, his opponent won't be able to either. He takes quiet steps forward as the smoke thickens, treading carefully. When he approaches what he assumes is the center of the arena, he stops. He waits. He *listens.*

The crowd has gone silent in anticipation.

It feels like several minutes have passed as he crouches in the center of the field, waiting with bated breath for something to happen. There's a soft crunch of dirt to his left, he dodges right.

In the time it took for Yaoyorozu to get to him, the smoke has already begun to thin, dragged into the stands by the breeze. As it begins clearing he sees the tell-tell glint of something metallic careening towards the spot he was just in.

The girl's head whips around in confusion, a pair of what Izuku assumes are a set of basic thermal goggles covering her eyes.

That's how she was able to find me then.

He crouches low, keeping himself out of her line of sight. When Izuku catches sight of the weapon she's wielding he wants to laugh at the pure irony of it.

Midoriya eyes the staff in her hand. He could easily take it from her. Her grip on it is weak at best and her center of gravity is off. Stealing it could give him the advantage he needs to progress to the next round, but it could also put him in danger of revealing himself as Piper. Izuku, however, needs all the advantages he can get. He weighs his options for a moment, watching as the girl drops into a more

defensive stance. The skin along her arm lights up again, but instead of more smoke, he's greeted by the sight of a shield materializing along her forearm.

Izuku can't afford to do any less than his best.

He darts forward from her blind spot, taking ahold of the staff and twisting. Her wrist twists with it, forcing her to release the weapon. He rips it from her hand in one swift motion, jumping back to distance himself before she can try for any counterattacks.

"And Midoriya slips through Yaoyorozu's guard! Taking the staff Yaoyorozu had intended to beat him with! Her creation quirk has turned against her, arming her opponent!"

Izuku stands, pulling himself to his full height, more confident now that he has a familiar weapon in his hands. He expertly twirls the staff in his hands, getting a feel for its weight. It's heavier than the pipe he used as Piper, heavier even still than the solid oak ones they use at the dojo. He'll have to be careful with it, it'll pack more of a punch than the ones he's used to working with.

By now a majority of the smoke has cleared and Yaoyorozu has generated another staff from her hand. She stands a good six feet away from him, watching him cautiously.

Now that he knows her quirk, he can't afford to let this fight go on any longer than necessary.

Yaoyorozu wields her weapon one-handed, more like a sword than any bo staff he's seen. The shield along her right arm is smaller, but, if she knows how to use it, it too could be used as a kind of weapon.

Izuku stills the staff in his hands, taking a defensive position.

He can tell from the girl's facial expressions alone that she lacks the confidence to beat him. She lacks the confidence to make the decisions that she'll need to make in order to win. She doesn't trust her abilities, doesn't trust herself. That's why Midoriya will be the ultimate victor.

Izuku makes the first move, staff slamming into her shield with a sharp clang of metal against metal that makes his ears ring. Yaoyorozu flinches back from the blow, eyes pinching closed on an instinct that

she hasn't shaken just yet.

He can't give her time to think, can't give her the time to regain her confidence.

He attacks again and this time she blocks with her staff. He puts a bit of space between them and she makes a wild swipe with the staff that he sidesteps with an ease granted to him only after years of hard practice. The next swing she makes he bats away, staves vibrating painfully in their hands upon impact. With her grip as low as it is Yaoyorozu drops the weapon, shaking her hand out. She doesn't have time to create a new weapon before Midoriya is attacking once again.

She grits her teeth, stumbling back.

Izuku spins, leg arching high and foot catching behind the back edge of her shield. He brings his foot back down, pulling both the shield and the girl attached to it, towards the ground.

Yaoyorozu hits the ground hard, unprepared for the attack. The breath is knocked out of her in one fell swoop and the arm still trapped against the shield flares with pain. She rolls over, blinking against the harsh rays of the sun as she cradles her arm to her chest. Above her, her opponent looms, stationed in an attack position and staff hovering in direct alignment with her throat.

"I-I give up," she croaks.

"Yaoyorozu has lost! Midoriya advances to the next round!"

Izuku feels all the tension run out of him as the match is called and the noise of the crowd drowns out the blood still rushing through his ears. After a moment he reaches out to help the girl back up. "Are you hurt?" he asks, nearly shouting to be heard over the cheering.

Yaoyorozu looks up at him in surprise. "My arm," she replies simply, taking his offered hand with her uninjured one.

Midoriya winces. "Sorry about that."

"It's fine."

One of the medical robots Izuku had seen at the end of the previous round makes its reappearance to escort the Yaoyorozu to where he's sure Recovery Girl is waiting with that disapproving look on her face.

“Hey!” Midoriya shouts after her nervously, wondering why he feels so desperate to say the words locked on his tongue. When she pauses on the field, turning back to him, Izuku continues. “You lack confidence,” he calls out bluntly. “That’s why you lost. You had the skill to make it into UA’s hero course, on recommendation nonetheless. You’ve worked hard to get here.” His thoughts swirl. *Maybe,* he thinks, *just maybe... this is something I would’ve wanted to hear in her place.* “You should have more faith in your abilities.”

He’d seen the defeat in her eyes when she’d found her own staff pointed down at her threateningly. He’d seen the doubt.

“You fought hard.”

You can be a hero.

Chapter End Notes

> OH HOHO YOU ALL DOUBTED ME, I SAW THE COMMENTS, YOU THOUGHT I DIDN'T PLAN THIS SHIT OUT!!! Smh your faith in me is so little, but Piper's death has begun to be noticed by the media, in the midst of the sports festival no less! I've been so excited to post this chapter and I hope you're just as excited for what's to come after reading it! Thank you all for all the support you've offered up until now and further on into the future!
> Until next time!

T Tauri

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart!!!

jackalspine

taztaztaz-blog

fretful-ferret x

Naomasa's apartment is dark despite the fact that it's already well past noon. Sansa's in his kitchen, quietly sifting through his cupboards for tea to make.

Tsukauchi sits on the couch, staring blankly at the tv. They've been watching coverage of the festival, but he's barely been aware of it. Sansa has to explain to him after the end of the second event for the third years that Reo hasn't made it through. Sansa has to do everything for him. He has to read out the text that Misaki sends him that says Reo's friend made it to the third event. He has to change the channel so they can watch it. He has to point out Reo when the camera pans momentarily to the audience.

Naomasa feels numb. He feels empty.

Piper was only one of the many people he's failed as a detective over the years. But, somewhere along the way, Tsukauchi had gotten attached. He formed a relationship where he shouldn't have.

Somewhere along the way, he'd forgotten that Piper was more than just a kid. He was a vigilante, he dealt with dangerous people whose bad sides he was frequently on. Piper was not invincible no matter how much he tried to seem that way.

Sansa returns with two cups of tea, urging the second one into Naomasa's hands. The heat seeps through the ceramic mug, grounding him. Midoriya is fighting on screen, steel staff twirling between his hands. The detective watches the tv quietly. He does not drink the tea,

he does not look away from the screen.

“He was still alive,” Tsukauchi murmurs. “He was still alive when that letter was sent.”

Sansa pauses mid-sip, sighing as he sets his cup down. He carefully takes the mug from Naomasa as well, gently placing it on the coffee table.

Angry tears blur his view of the tv. “He was still alive. We could've saved him,” his voice cracks horribly and Sansa takes one of the detective’s hands between his.

Naomasa had overheard the call Sansa had taken earlier, listening quietly to what updates there’s been to Piper’s case. He grits his teeth, bowing his head over his lap. “We could’ve saved him!” Spittle flies wildly from the detective’s mouth, but Sansa does not so much as flinch. “We did nothing to help him or find whatever bastard was hurting him! And look what they did to him! Look what they did, Sansa! *He died alone!"* He slams his fist into the table, voice breaking. “They took his teeth,” he cries, “They took his *eyes."*

Sansa wraps him in a hug, pulling the detective’s head into his chest. “I know,” his voice is hoarse, but determined, *soothing.* "I know."

Naomasa clings to the other man, sobbing into his shoulder. “A kid,” Naomasa cries. “He was just a kid.”

Sansa holds him tighter.

“You fought hard.” Those are Izuku’s last words to Yaoyorozu before she’s escorted away. Izuku lets out a relieved sigh as he turns, heading back towards the tunnel he’d come out of. Above him, the audience roars, cheering for the secondhand adrenaline rush he’s offered them. Situated above the exit is a small walkway where he spots a group of his classmates. They all wave down at him.

“GO MIDORIYA!”

“Show ‘em what 1-C’s made of!”

“You’ve got this, Midoriya!”

The unexpected words of encouragement catch him off guard, but he recovers quickly enough, smiling up at them brightly. “For 1-C!” He

calls back, raising his fist in the air. He's surprised to find Yaoyorozu's staff still clutched in his raised hand.

Well, he supposes, *I guess she won't be needing it anymore today. I wonder if they'll let me use it in my other matches.*

He ditches the staff in his prep room, sprinting through the halls and up the stairs to the student section in order to make it to the stands in time to watch Shinsou's match.

He takes a moment to catch his breath at the top of the stairs.

"Midoriya!"

Izuku turns to find Iida waving at him from one of the student sections. Behind him, Midoriya catches sight of Hagakure's head and shoulders peeking over his shoulder.

"Iida, Hagakure," he greets, smiling at the two of them.

"You did great out there!" Hagakure notes excitedly, "You were all like bam! Swish! Kapow!" She punches out at the air, imitating his fight.

Izuku grins. "I wouldn't have even had a shot at making it this far without the two of you."

"And yet," Iida states, "Without your planning, our team would have had a much more difficult time at making it."

"Iida's probably different, but I definitely wouldn't have made it to the third round without you! You even came up with a new way for me to use my quirk!" Hagakure laughs excitedly.

Present Mic's voice echoes through the stadium, drawing their attention back towards the field. "The guy with the power to make others do his bidding! From general education, it's Shinsou Hitoshi! Versus! Sorry, but it's the girl who didn't do much last round! Also from general education, it's Zheng Bao!"

Izuku frowns at Zheng's introduction, gaze catching on the commentator box as the crowd cheers.

Iida pushes his glasses back up the ridge of his nose. "It seems Shinsou and Zheng's match is about to begin."

Izuku nods. "Yeah, I've gotta go now, but I'll see you guys around."

“We’ll be rooting for you!” Hagakure calls, waving excitedly as he disappears into a different student section a little further down.

Reo looks up as Izuku collapses in the seat next to him. “Cutting it close now aren’t we?”

“I ran into my teammates from the last round,” Izuku huffs with a laugh.

“Well,” Reo starts without preamble, nodding towards the field, “you were teamed up with both of them, right? Who do you think will win?”

Midnight’s whip cracks. “Match nine! Start!”

“Shinsou’s quirk is really powerful,” Izuku responds, leaning against the balcony to get a better view of the field. “If he can get Zheng to respond to him then he’ll win for sure. But, there are lots of ways that Zheng could use her quirk to beat him if he fails to get her talking.” He can see that Shinsou says something, but can’t hear what’s said before Zheng is charging at him. “They announced it at the start of the first match after all. There’s three ways to win. Knocking your opponent out of the ring, forcing them to forfeit, or immobilizing them,” Midoriya states ominously. “Zheng’s glue traps take time to set up, but if she’s smart enough, there are other ways she could immobilize Shinsou. The match will be skewed in one of their favors, but whose direction depends on whether or not Shinsou can get her to talk.”

The fight is quick to turn into an all-out brawl as soon as Zheng reaches Shinsou. It’s not flashy, but it’s brutal and dirty and just what a crowd like this craves. Shinsou takes an elbow to the face as the two of them try their best to push each other off the field. From their spot in the stands, Midoriya can tell that Shinsou’s constantly talking, but without microphones attached to them, it’s unlikely that anyone will be able to tell what’s being said. Zheng is smart enough to keep her mouth shut throughout the fight, using her quirk to stick herself to the back of Shinsou shirt and doing her best to try and drag him out of bounds. But, it’s not long before Shinsou finally says something that has Zheng snapping back at him in rage.

Her posture goes slack, face going blank.

“Did Shinsou win then?” Reo asks, watching intently from beside him.

Shinsou utters a command and Zheng releases him.

Midoriya nods.

She walks off the field.

The moment Shinsou releases his quirk is obvious. All of the previous tension in Zheng's shoulders returns tenfold. She whirls around in confusion, fury written along every line in her face as she catches sight of Shinsou again.

"Zheng is out of bounds! Shinsou advances to round two!"

Reo jumps up from the seat beside him, cheering with the rest of the crowd. His smile is bright and Izuku can't help but mirror it, standing up with him. They wave down at the boy as his eyes turn towards the stands, face flushed and surprised by the excitement crackling through the air like electricity.

Together the two of them start up a chant of the boy's name and soon enough the rest of the stadium follows suit.

Zheng Bao and her fury are forgotten.

Both Shinsou and Zheng are escorted off the field by medical bots. Zheng is facing away from them, but Shinsou's nose is bloody and broken and his face bruised to hell.

Izuku and Reo settle back into their seats, riding off the secondhand adrenaline like the rest of the audience as the next set of participants are called into the starting tunnels.

Reo nudges him with an elbow as they wait. He's wide-eyed and staring down at his phone in a mix of shock and confusion.

"What?"

Reo only tilts his screen, giving Izuku a glimpse at the reposted news clip that's being played. Izuku can't hear it, but the headline gives him all the information he needs to know.

Vigilante Pied Piper Found Dead at Dagobah

They share a brief look with one another. Izuku leans back in his seat, staring ahead. There's a mixed tangle of emotions squirming in his chest that he can't quite decipher.

“That’s it then,” Izuku murmurs.

Reo, on the other hand, looks nervous. “Who… who is it?”

Midoriya does not turn towards him. “Me, technically. The DNA matches at least.”

“What do you mean?”

“They made a clone.”

“You gave them a clone?!” Reo whisper-shouts at him. He’s quick to glance around for anyone listening in on their conversation, but everyone is too enraptured by the current match. It looks like it’ll be a close one.

“It’s fine, there’s no reason for anyone to make the connection between us.”

“And my uncle? What about him?” Reo asks incredulously.

“Even he won’t be able to tell with how bloated that thing probably is after being in the ocean for so long. Not to mention the fact that a buzz cut does wonders, I couldn’t even recognize myself to be fair.”

His friend breathes out a curse, leaning back in his seat.

"I’m fine,” Izuku reassures him, *“Everything’s fine.”*

pog-kemon reblogged **snakes4hands**

suzsuz:

[Gif 1: *Aerial shot of Shinsou standing at the edge of the field as his match starts. His posture is casual, hands stuffed in his pockets. There’s a sly grin on his face. “So, you really didn’t do shit last round, huh?”.*]

No one talk to me this kid is literally the definition of gaslight, gatekeep, girlboss

averyarts13:

why would you say this, no literally why would you say this to me now I cant unsee it

#UA #UA Sports Festival #i'm literally in tears someone help i'm—

132 notes

Shinsou joins them in the middle first fight of the second round, met by a warm round of congratulations from both his two friends and the assortment of students around them. Izuku laughs, clapping as the teen takes a seat beside them.

"You did great out there."

Shinsou huffs a laugh. "You too."

Izuku grins before they all turn their attention to the current match, watching as Ashido and a 1-B student, Bondo, continue to wear one another down. Their quirks are the antithesis of each other. Because of this, the match drags on for what seems like ages. It goes on for long enough that when Reo leaves to go to the bathroom and comes back the two are still fighting. It takes another ten full minutes before both of them have collapsed due to quirk exhaustion and the match is determined as a draw.

The start of the next match-up offers the return of Todoroki Shouto and the 1-B student, Yanagi Reiko. To be fair the girl puts up a good fight, using her quirk to break off small chunks of Todoroki's own ice and send them hurtling towards him. And while she does manage to nick him once, she quickly exhausts herself and sees defeat at the hands of Todoroki. Her fight, at the very least, lasts longer than Iida's match against the boy.

As the round ends and the next starts up Izuku's anxiety starts to get the best of him. A tension that only he feels sinks into his bones. He's been able to ignore the fact up until this point, but soon enough he knows he'll have to fight Shinsou for a spot in the semi-finals.

His leg bounces nervously to no one's notice except Reo's who gives him an encouraging pat on the back as Izuku stands halfway through the fight between 1-A's Tokoyami and 1-B's Kendo.

Shinsou snags his wrist as he leaves, staring up at him from his seat. "Do your best," he states determinedly. "I won't take any less than

your best.”

Verdant eyes meet blooming lilac. Midoriya nods stiffly.

Eneli / tied bros™ w/ charlie

@bigbrainsimp

Bro is UA just made up of pretty people because i’m— 😳 😳

2:47pm · 4/29/32 · Twitter Web App

16 Retweets **139** Likes

🧚 **Saroth** 🎸 @pineappleisaberry · 1h

Replying to @**bigbrainsimp**

RIGHT???? LIKE ICE BOY??? ELECTRICITY KID??? A C I D G I R L???

Eneli / tied bros™ w/ charlie @bigbrainsimp · 34m

Replying to @**m0thh0urs**

ICE BOY MY BELOVED

ashy @catsofTokyo · 1h

Replying to @**bigbrainsimp**

THEY’RE ALL SO PRETTY AND FOR WHAT? THEY’RE GONNA STOP CRIME WITH THEIR LOOKS ALONE 😩

Riass @riabun · 1h

Replying to @**bigbrainsimp**

The Yaoyorozo person is the prettiest person alive and no one can

convince me otherwise /p

Azzy // all mighty stan @noticemeallmight · 56m

Replying to @**bigbrainsimp**

not a single person in this comment section is talking about that green-haired kid OR the spiky blonde and honestly that's a crime

goose @pukio · 34m

Replying to @**bigbrainsimp**

Todoroki Shouto my beloved

÷MMMB÷ @mothman8myass · 32m

Replying to @**bigbrainsimp**

gonna become a villain once they graduate just so they can arrest me /j

✿ Mouse (confused)✿ @Tea_Beez · 12m

Replying to @**bigbrainsimp**

GAY GAY HOMOSEXUAL GAY, THE GIRLS!!! THE GIRLS ARE SO PRETTY!!!!! 😍😍😍

Ryyan 🎬 @youthp_ryyan · 1m

Replying to @**bigbrainsimp**

This is how dangerous parasocial relationships can form. Todoroki Shouto doesn't love you. He can't love you. Todoroki Shouto doesn't KNOW you. He can appreciate you but he can't fucking love you. /c

Izuku takes to wandering the tunnels beneath the stadium in an attempt to calm himself. He passes very few people as he walks, barely acknowledging them when he does. It's his absent-minded wandering that lands him in a situation that incurs an extreme case of déjà vu. It's the oddly familiar voice that Izuku picks up on first, pausing at the corner of a split in the hallway to listen in, trying to place it.

"You could've easily prevented that injury had you used your left side." There's a pause. "It's time to grow up, *Shouto."*

It's then that Midoriya's able to place a name to the voice. The number two hero in Japan, the flame hero: Endeavor. Izuku tenses at the animosity in the man's voice.

"Rebelling like an impudent child will not allow you to surpass All Might. Understand this, you're different from your brothers. You're my greatest creation!"

Midoriya presses his back to the wall. Wasn't he speaking to his son? A cold fire crawls up Izuku's throat.

"Is that all you've got to say to me?" The venom in Shouto's voice catches him off guard.

Midoriya peeks around the corner, catching sight of their backs. Endeavor is wreathed in flames that illuminate Todoroki's retreating figure.

"I'll win this with mother's power alone."

"That may be enough to win this festival, but it won't be enough to surpass All Might. You'll reach your limit soon."

Izuku watches as Todoroki strides down the hall, disappearing around the corner with a sour taste in his mouth. He wants to do something. He wants to reassure the teen, wants to lecture Endeavor about what it means to be a good parent. Midoriya eyes the fire extinguisher strapped to the wall across from him, a primordial temptation tugging at his gut.

"Midoriya Izuku. I've been looking for you."

Izuku feels a chill run through him. It's not Endeavor's voice, neither is it Todoroki's. Midoriya turns to find Eraserhead standing a few feet behind him. He glances back down the hall to where Endeavor had

just been to find him disappearing around the same corner as his son.

He looks back at his teacher. “Aizawa Sensei.” He tries for a smile. “Did Yamada Sensei send you with another message?”

“No,” the hero states, “This is a personal trip. You reminded me of someone so I wanted to ask you something.”

Midoriya has prepared himself for this moment, of all the people who had a chance of recognizing him after his little stunt in his first match, it was Eraserhead that was at the top of his list.

“You know anything about Pied Piper?”

Given his history, Izuku was expecting a more direct question but takes it in stride nonetheless. “You mean that vigilante?” He asks, gently tilting his head. “They were the one that got involved at the USJ, right?” Midoriya mentally shakes off the memories dancing against the backs of his eyelids, doing his best not to react to the ghost of the looming figure his mind conjures at the edge of his vision.

The hero only nods, eyeing him carefully from within his shroud of bandages.

If Aizawa had tracked Izuku down thirty minutes earlier, he doesn’t think he’d be as calm as he feels now. Because thirty minutes ago the death of the vigilante Pied Piper had yet to be made known. “Didn’t they um…” Izuku swallows thickly, “Didn’t they just find his body this morning?”

In Aizawa’s defense, he doesn’t so much as flinch at the words, keeping just as calm and composed as before. He remains silent for a long moment. “This morning?”

“At the beach,” Izuku explains carefully, “I saw online where they had the whole of Dagobah roped off. My friend showed me a news clip earlier.”

It’s in that moment that Izuku realizes his mistake. While their plan for Piper’s death included a third party kidnapping after his escape from the USJ, it was the injuries that he’d sustained there, the injuries he received *protecting Eraserhead* that made their story believable.

“He—” Izuku trails off, “You–.” Midoriya stops himself from saying more. “I’m sorry.”

Aizawa nods but says nothing.

He doesn't need to know that Izuku is apologizing on behalf of the guilt the boy had just seen spark in Aizawa's eyes.

I did not die for you.

"You should get going," Eraserhead tells him, "Your match will be soon."

Izuku watches as the hero continues down the hall, brushing shoulders with the boy as he passes.

Aizawa does not return to the announcers' booth.

After parting with Aizawa, Izuku makes a b-line for his prep room. He barely has enough time to make it back and grab the staff he'd borrowed off Yaoyorozu before his name is being called over the loudspeaker. He hopes they'll continue to let him use the staff. He'd seen support students stacked with the gear they'd made as well as a hero student or two sporting support gear meant to stabilize their quirks, and really, for a kid without a quirk, this wasn't much different.

The mix of guilt he'd felt for Aizawa is quickly replaced by his pre-fight anxiety as he makes his way towards the field. Izuku drops into a crouch in the starter tunnel he's been assigned, releasing a shaky breath as he eyes the red light above him. Shinsou… Shinsou has a bright hero career ahead of him. After seeing his quirk in action Midoriya does not doubt that. It's a power perfectly suited to underground heroes. He could've saved Eri with that quirk.

Izuku shakes the thought off violently. *You did all you could.*

Whether Shinsou wins the sports festival or not Midoriya's certain that that path to heroism will still be easy for him.

Shinsou was the main reason Izuku had been able to make it past the first round, he owed him for that. Even so, Midoriya can't afford to simply let this opportunity go for the sake of fairness. Nothing in his life has been fair. There's no reason to force himself to conform to a standard that wouldn't meet him halfway.

Izuku pushes himself up, breathing deep.

Shinsou was the one that asked him to go all out.

Izuku would not lose to him.

The light above him flashes green.

The moment he sets foot outside the tunnel, Present Mic's voice booms through the stadium as he makes his way towards the edge of the starting field. "The boy with the ability to brainwash! Versus! The kid toting around his new staff like a trophy! Both from general education! It's Shinsou versus Midoriya!"

Izuku is good at waiting. That's why, when the match starts with the crack of Midnight's whip he stays where he is, waiting to see what Shinsou will do, to see how far he'll go to win.

"So," Shinsou calls, "you already know what my quirk is. Are you disgusted by it?"

Midoriya opens his mouth to respond before quickly snapping it shut again, catching himself.

Shinsou smiles, pushing on. "People usually are, I understand if you feel the same. It's a villain's quirk after all."

Izuku can tell right away that this is Shinsou's tactic to get him to talk. Shinsou knows, after spending so much time around him, that Izuku would be the last person to agree with such things. But, Izuku can hear the genuine undertone of curiosity, of *anxiety,* that permeates the question. Izuku can see the 'what if's looping through his friend's head.

Izuku has fought *real* villains, has *died* to *real* villains. Despite this, never has he thought that any of their quirks were villainous. Shinsou would go on to do great things with his quirk as long as he's given the opportunity to do so. If Shinsou loses here, if he's as determined as Izuku is to become a hero, then the hand that Reo extended to him, Izuku will gladly extend it to Shinsou as well should he need it. Together they can carve a path to heroism outside this bigoted school system.

Izuku grins and the sight catches Shinsou off guard. Izuku takes up his staff and dutifully carves a single word into the dirt.

NO.

Losing here would not mean failure for either of them. Izuku wants to reassure him of that.

Midoriya charges forward. He feels guilty in a way with how easy it is to beat Shinsou. Izuku has been taught how to fight since he was nine, but it's obvious that his friend has never seen anything outside of a schoolyard brawl. The one punch that Shinsou manages to throw is easily deflected as Izuku pushes him back, closer to the edge of the field.

"Hey, hey!" Shinsou grunts, trying to stall, "What's worse than finding a worm in your apple?" He stumbles back another step waiting for a response that doesn't come. "Being robbed."

Izuku falters in his next attack, a laugh of disbelief escaping him. "What—"

His body stiffens. Shinsou grins.

There are lots of things Shinsou could've probably said to rile Midoriya up. Something about his scars, something about his quirklessness, something about his obvious past with the kid with the explosion quirk. Izuku would understand, he thinks, if he'd gone that route out of desperation. He'd understand, but Shinsou doesn't think he'd be able to forgive himself for doing so. This wasn't Zheng he was up against, he knew too much about Izuku.

The anti-joke had thankfully worked. There's no longer a chance for anything darker to slip out in his desperation, there was no longer any risk of ruining their friendship.

Izuku's, in the unstable position that he's in, sends his body careening towards Shinsou's chest. The staff falls from his hands, kicking up dirt as Shinsou's eyes widen. He braces himself to catch the boy, firmly planting afoot behind him as he catches Izuku as gently as he can. A fall from this height would be enough to break out of his quirk.

Midnight's whip cracks loudly, startling him. "Shinsou is out of bounds! Midoriya Izuku wins the match! Moving onto the Semifinals!"

Shinsou's eyes travel numbly down at his feet. The roar of the crowd is reduced to a noisy hum as blood rushes through his ears. His back

foot is mere inches over the boundary line. Something inside him crumbles.

He releases his quirk's hold on Midoriya.

Izuku comes to with his face pressed against Shinsou's chest. The stadium is loud as his friend helps him find his feet again. He looks around in confusion. It feels like he's just been pulled from a dream.

"You won," Shinsou explains softly.

Izuku looks up at him in surprise, head still a little hazy. "But, you—"

"Stepped over the boundary line," Shinsou finishes for him.

Izuku blinks, glancing down at their feet. "But-"

"You won," he states, more firmly this time. "You have to keep winning for us." Shinsou's hands fall heavy on his shoulders, grounding Izuku. "You have to show everyone what 1-C's made of."

Chapter End Notes

I wrote half of this chapter in one day, I'm going to take a nap.

Until next time <3

Molecular Cloud

Chapter Summary

> After two harsh battles against Momo and Shinsou. The semi-finals have arrived.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart:

noodlekitty

kuerbissuppe

inez-azalea

fretful-ferret x x x x x

taztaztaz-blog x x x x x

Jirou's brows furrow low over her eyes. In her hands she watches as universes collapse and shutter and collide, the threads of fate snapping as if it is nothing more than a worn tapestry made by human hands. Jirou curses, drawing the attention of those around her.

"What?"

Jirou gnaws at her lip, completely oblivious to the current match between the two gen ed. students now that she's seen the next page of the universe turn over. "Do you guys remember that vigilante that helped us at the USJ?"

Mina leans over from the row behind her. "Did he get caught?" she asks, peeking at the girl's phone.

"He *died."*

There's a long pause, a moment of quiet that even the universe stops to listen to.

Todoroki stands stiffly, slipping his way out of the student box without a word. No one goes after him. No one so moves or says

anything to disturb the newfound quiet in their student box. Bakugou watches Midoriya's fight, gaze unwavering, but thoughts drifting back USJ.

"He shouldn't've been there," Bakugou grunts as the universe tilts, flipping on its axis.

Uraraka's head snaps towards him, an angry glint in her eye. "He saved us!"

"You left," Bakugou states, "He should've left with you. He didn't do anything else after you all left besides get hurt."

"Bakugou," Kirishima's voice drifts from behind him, "Not cool, man."

Uraraka glares in borderline tears before looking away again, eyes fixed angrily on the field below.

Katsuki glances at her only momentarily before tuning back into the match. If Midoriya wins they'll be going head to head. His lips curl into a smirk. He had ignored Katsuki's warning to stay out of UA and it seems that since making it in he'd managed to grow some semblance of a spine.

He bares his teeth in a grin as the universe heaves upwards and Midoriya ragdolls as Shinsou's foot steps over the boundary line.

Bakugou would make sure to snap it in two.

In an alleyway in Hosu a man takes advantage of the universe's collapse, rewriting his destiny and the destiny of those deemed unworthy by his blade. The vigilante's death has left a tear in the tapestry that must be filled. *He* will be the one to fill it.

Someone must answer for his death.

Pied Piper is dead. The universe shutters and weeps.

Strangely enough, Midoriya doesn't feel as nervous as he thought he would when stares at the updated bracket. He's trained for this, lived through scenarios like this. He's fought, he's *died,* in fights like the one he's about to undertake. Izuku has proven his skills, that's how he made it this far. *That's how he's still alive.*

Even so, it's Bakugou that he's up against next. Izuku would have to

beat him if he wanted to make it to the finals and beating Bakugou, to him, feels like an impossible task. He's spent so many years of his life holding himself back from fighting with the boy. But, in a way, Bakugou has been doing the same thing. He was always cautious not to do anything that may draw the eyes of concerned adults.

Midoriya's fists curl at his sides before he releases a deep sigh, fists relaxing. He'd like to see Reo one last time before his match, even if it's only for moral support. But, Izuku doubts he'll have enough time to make it all the way up to the stands and back again before the start of his round. Todoroki has had notoriously short matches after all.

He gnaws at his bottom lip as he makes his way towards the prep room assigned to him and shares a short text conversation with Reo once he gets back. They casually banter with one another to help calm Izuku's nerves and discuss his match with Shinsou before Todoroki's next match.

Once it starts, he opens the live stream on his phone. He watches enraptured as Todoroki wins against Tokoyami. Wisps of flame ignite in a soft half-halo around the scar on his face as fire flickers to life along the boy's left side, eating at his uniform in a blinding display of pure, unadulterated power. It's the first time Izuku's seen him use this side of his quirk. He's surprised by its sudden appearance, but not by its existence. The light of Todoroki's blazing flame has his opponent's quirk shrinking in on itself. Even in the USJ, Midoriya doesn't recall ever seeing Todoroki use this part of his quirk.

And, with the end of Todoroki's match, the start of his own once again rears its head.

A message comes through from Reo. It's an image of him and Shinsou in the stands. A sly smile graces Shinsou's lips, beside him Reo offers a bright grin of his own. The text below it reads, "Kick his ass, broccoli boy."

Midoriya stares down at his phone with a dopey smile. He replies with a simple message of his own: love u guys, i'll do what i can o7

The speaker above him crackles to life. "Midoriya Izuku please make your way to tunnel B for standby. Midoriya Izuku please make your way to tunnel B for standby."

Another message comes through as Midoriya stands. It says simply: love you too but please be safe, okay?

Izuku smiles softly. Sending one last message before he leaves his phone on the table and exits the room. The message reads: i promise not to worry you

The halls beneath the stadium are quiet and lonely. They amplify the unease he feels whispering at the back of his mind. There's a hum-like vibration of noise the closer he gets to the starting tunnel, the roar of the audience carrying through the underground like the echoing thrum of supernovae.

Turning the corner finds him at the far end of the starting tunnel, staring out where the light touches the field. It creeps into the underground, reaching into the cold of the shadows. Dust particles float aimlessly through the light.

Izuku can't see over the raised section of earth in the middle of the field to where he knows Bakugou is waiting. He can, however, feel the excitement crackling through the air. This match would be the last one to determine who would be participating in the finals.

The red light above him fades, casting him in darkness before coming back a bright emerald green.

He marches forward, greeted by Present Mic's voice booming through the stadium.

"He's been speeding his way through the one v one matches! It's Midoriya Izuku of general education! Versus! The powerhouse that's been blowing away the competition! It's Bakugou Katsuki from the hero department!"

Midoriya stops at the edge of the field as the world around him dulls. The sounds of the crowd come to him as if underwater. Before him stands his bully of some ten-odd years. The boy who gave Midoriya his first scars. The boy who told him he would never be a hero. The boy who punched him, who burned him, who told him to pray for a quirk in his next life.

Bakugou's hands spark with the promise of unrestrained violence.

Midoriya is standing in his way.

Somewhere within the watery outside world, the crack of a whip calls a start to the match.

Izuku smirks past his timeworn trauma, determined to overcome it once and for all. Bakugou charges. Izuku's emotional competence crumbles.

Izuku blocks his first punch with a panicked swing of his staff, steel slamming into the other boy's wrist. Bakugou bares his teeth in pain, switching to an explosion-fueled high kick that Izuku ducks under.

He darts away, doing his best to put some distance between the two of them. Izuku thought he was ready for this fight, he'd prepared himself mentally as much as he could. Even so, he can feel the invisible tremor in his legs, can hear the age-old voice in his head telling him to submit in order to avoid stoking the other's anger any further.

Bakugou grabs at the back of his uniform in the midst of his attempted escape, palms crackling with heat that comes far too close to his neck for him to be comfortable.

"Never turn your back to the enemy, little listener! How will Midoriya escape this one!"

Izuku struggles, trying to rip himself out of the boy's grasp as fear crawls up his throat. Heat prickles against his still-sensitive scar and, without a second thought, Izuku unzips the front of his uniform and frantically slips out of it. Bakugou slings the jacket away, palms cackling menacingly as he marches forward. He takes his time, stalking towards Izuku as a predator would its prey. Izuku uses this time to compose himself, viciously shaking off old memories, angry with himself for letting them get the best of him.

He readies himself, dropping into a defensive position in the same moment that Bakugou pauses. The universe holds its breath. Bakugou *stares* and an infinite number of galaxies stare with him. The explosions in his palms fade out like dying stars. Izuku is unprepared for his sudden silence, only able to watch the other carefully. It's too small of a detail for anyone else to see, but, as it is, Bakugou gets a full view of the scars littering Izuku's upper arms. With his jacket gone, Izuku's exposed every last one that's not covered by his tank top for the scrutiny of his former bully. They stand out beneath the sunlight, shiny whites and puffy reds that are visible to no one but his opponent. They're as difficult to count as the stars in the sky, streaked by the occasional splash of red sequence galaxies.

Anger, fiery and hot, graces Bakugou's face once again. He looks away

from the multitude of scars to lock eyes with Izuku. “This is why you’ll never be a hero,” Bakugou sneers, “You can’t even protect yourself. How the hell did you ever expect to protect other people?”

Something inside Izuku snaps, something hot and ugly forming at the base of his throat. It writhes there like the molten core of a newly formed planet.

Izuku pulls himself to his full height. “How the hell do you ever expect to protect other people if all you do is hurt those weaker than you,” Midoriya hisses. “I’ve seen people like you, *Bakugou.”* There's a newfound confidence that radiates off him. “All of them were *villains.”*

Bakugou doesn’t hesitate to charge at him after the taunt, fury writing wrinkles between his brows and around his mouth as he bares his teeth. “Die!” His fist swings wide and Izuku lets go of his staff, catching Bakugou’s fist, wrapping his arm around it, and spinning.

Midoriya has, admittedly, never really fought Bakugou before. That’s why fighting back feels so foreign. That’s why watching Bakugou's back slam into the arena floor feels so forbidden.

Spittle flies up from the other’s mouth as all the air is forced from his lungs.

“You always lead with your right.”

fake.lovejoy

[*Image* : A screenshot of an online news article. A bolded headline proclaims, “Hero Killer Stain Loose in Tokyo”. Beneath it is a blurry screenshot from security camera footage of the man fleeing. It’s the only image police have managed to get of him.]

Liked by **oneday_ncfc** and 538 others

fake.lovejoy I know that the sports festival is going on rn but this is an important PSA, especially for people who have friends or family members that are heroes, there’s a villain running around rn that’s killing heroes, I heard he almost killed someone else today in Hosu, he never stays in one place for too long so please be careful and spread the word, information is power ✊ #herokillerstain #stain #heroes #PSA #rip

View all 12 comments

ashkabuso Do you know who he got today???

fake.lovejoy not yet, ill let you know once i hear something though

Yd.U Rip Traunt Stream 😓✊ she's gone too soon they better find that bastard

Half_Two This dude seriously needs to be stopped, he's just gonna keep killing people if he's not caught

killmy.kat bro wtffff i hope the most recent dude is okay

Once Bakugou's on the ground it's easy to get on top of him. He does his best to pin the boy down but it's not long before he breaks out of Midoriya's hold and Izuku takes an elbow to the chin. He rolls off Bakugou, making a dive for where he'd dropped his staff. He grabs both it and his discarded jacket before scrambling back up as the other boy recovers. It's got a large hole burnt into the back of it, but Midoriya tucks it into the waistband of his pants for safekeeping nonetheless.

Behind him, Bakugou's explosions carry the other boy into the air. Izuku rolls to the side as Katsuki barrels into the ground just beside him. His landing kicks up a cloud of dust and sand as Izuku is thrown back. The dust obscures their vision as he pulls himself back to his feet. He squints, checking for movement in the cloud, doing his best to hold his cough. He pulls the jacket out of his waistband, pressing it over his nose and mouth so he can breathe. As the dust begins to clear Izuku catches sight of Bakugou's side.

"Look at that quirk! Powerful enough to throw up its own smokescreen! But the real question is will he be able to use it to his advantage or will Midoriya use it against him! Remember audience, this is the same thing that happened in Midoriya's first round!"

Izuku takes a deep breath and pulls the jacket away from his face, hanging it from the top of his staff, and flinging the jacket towards the boy as hard as he can. It flutters through the air, catching Katsuki's eye as Midoriya melts back into the cloud of dust. Bakugou charges at the jacket, chasing the afterimage of his opponent. Izuku slips behind him, footsteps quiet against the harsh ring of explosions as Bakugou swipes the jacket from midair.

Izuku appears suddenly from behind, the light of a thousand galaxies illuminating his eyes as his staff slams into Bakugou's upper back, just shy of where Midoriya had been aiming for. Katsuki stumbles forward from the blow, palms crackling as Izuku disappears again.

"Coward!" Bakugou spits, whipping around, "Hiding because you know you can't beat me head-on!"

"Coward!" Izuku calls back with a laugh, "Claiming your one-sided bullying as a mark of victory!" Something sour wells up in Izuku's chest, as acidic as the rain on Venus, eating him alive. "Quirkless! Powerless! *Deku!* If I'm so weak, then why am I holding my own against you! What does that make you, *Kacchan?!* If you can't even beat me then what makes you think you'll ever become the number one hero!"

The dust has thinned even more now and Bakugou scans his surroundings without offering a response.

In the time it takes him to spot Izuku, a staff is being hurled at him from the side, pinwheeling through the cloud of dust and smoke. Izuku is rewarded by a dull thunk and a string of curses as it slams painfully into the side of the Bakugou's head.

Izuku grins, rushing in and delivering a harsh kick right to Katsuki's ass. "I'm literally kicking your ass if you haven't noticed, *Kacchan."*

Bakugou spins on him. An explosion-fueled punch aimed directly at his face that Izuku deflects with a grimace. Izuku knees him in the gut and, in return, receives an exploding fist in his unguarded side. Despite his year of vigilantism, Midoriya is quick to eat his own words, swiftly overwhelmed by the boy's quirk. Bakugou goes airborne again, using his momentum to aim a kick at his head Izuku can only block with his arms.

"Deku!"

Strong, flashy quirks weren't that common in the underground. They drew too much attention for Izuku to ever have to deal with. In this open field with nowhere to escape and no backup to call the moment he understands he's gotten himself in over his head, Izuku's loss is guaranteed. One of Bakugou's fists slips through his defense, slamming into his cheek.

Izuku throws a fist of his own and feels the other boy's nose give way beneath it. He follows up with an elbow that splits Bakugou's brow

and drips blood into his eye. Unfortunately, this is not enough to make him give in.

An open palm slams into his chest, hot and fiery, and more painful than Midoriya remembers Katsuki's quirk ever being.

It's because he's not holding back.

Izuku jerks away, doing his best to put more distance between them. He makes a b-line for where he can see his staff. While it'd been rewarding at the time, throwing his weapon isn't the best choice he's probably made. Before he can reach it, however, Bakugou's using his quirk to catch up to him. His hand tangles in Midoriya's unruly hair, pulling him to a violent halt. He drives another open palm into Izuku's back, explosion easily ripping through his tank top. Izuku grunts in pain, pinching his eyes shut before he grabs at the hand in his hair, trying to break Bakugou's hold to no avail. Izuku turns to face the boy, glaring up at him.

"What happened to your taunt from earlier?" Bakugou sneers, "'You'll lose', wasn't it?"

Izuku grins at him, blood in his teeth and fear burning bright in his chest as Bakugou's grip on his hair tightens. "I didn't say I'd be the one to beat you, *Kacchan."* His eyes are viridescent, a sharp, toxic green.

"My name," Bakugou grits out, "Is not *Kacchan."*

"And I haven't been *Deku* in a long time," Midoriya laughs.

Katsuki shoves him back, releasing him.

Midoriya lets himself be pushed, falling back. The boy catches himself on his elbows, propping himself up on the dirt, legs splayed out in front of him. He could fight more, could push himself further. His everything hurts, but he could do it.

Shirakumo Oboro is watching the end of Midoriya's last match when he receives the call. He mutes the tv, briefly checking the caller ID to make sure it's not a client before picking up the moment he sees who it is.

On the other end of the line, the caller wastes no time in getting straight to his point. "He's dead, Oboro," Aizawa's voice is strained.

“The kid that saved me is dead.”

Shirakumo leans back in his seat, eyeing the tv. “Are you okay?”

There’s a pause. “Hizashi can bring me back once the sport’s festival is over.”

Oboro’s eyes fall shut, worry settling in his chest. “That’s not what I asked, Shouta.”

“What does that matter right now? This isn’t about me.”

“Shouta,” he repeats, pushing himself out of his chair to pace the living room.

“I’m *fine.”*

Oboro shakes his head, pushing further for an actual answer to his question. “You called me for a reason, Shou.”

Aizawa curses under his breath. “I know… I’m—” there’s another stretch of silence, “It’s just…” the man sighs, “Can we save this for when I get back?”

Their cat, Sushi, rubs against his leg, trying to grab Oboro’s attention. He glances down at the cat, crouching to pet him absent-mindedly. “If that’s what you want to do then that’s fine. I can come pick you up now if you need me. I’m sure it’ll be a while before ‘Zashi’s done.”

“I can survive ‘til he’s able to leave.” The sound of rustling filters through the speaker.

“You sure?”

“There’s only two more matches.”

Oboro’s eyes flicker back towards the tv, resigning himself to the wait before the other two get home. “One now, the last one just ended.”

There’s a short pause. “Who won?”

Bakugou wants more of a fight. Izuku can tell this much from the way he’s pacing the field several yards in front of him. But, he’s *waiting* for Midoriya to get up. He’s *waiting* because, just maybe, Izuku’s earlier words had gotten to him. He casts his eyes skywards instead. He makes a Bakugou wait. *Wouldn’t it be cruel to make him wait the rest of*

his life? he thinks absently. The sun hugs his cheeks, wind brushing through his hair, whispering sweet comforts to he who has experienced pain worse than this at the hands of people seeking to kill him. To he who has experienced death in more ways than just its physical form.

His thoughts turn to Reo. Izuku can picture him anxiously watching from where he's leaned against the balcony edge. His friend has only ever seen the aftermath of his fights against villains, seeing them first hand is a new experience for him. "He's probably worried right now, huh?" Izuku breathes.

Bakugou wants a fight.

"I'm tired," he sighs quietly, watching the clouds drift lazily above him. His head lulls towards where Midnight stands on the sidelines. He eyes her quietly before coming to his decision. *Stay unsatisfied,* he curses silently in Bakugou's direction. "I forfeit," Izuku calls, loud enough to be heard by the woman.

Bakugou's head whips back towards him.

Izuku only smiles at him lazily. "Any more than this and the people who care about me will start to worry. They'll think I'm trying to kill myself again." He hides his mischief behind a soft smile.

Bakugou wants a fight. Midoriya refuses to give it to him. He originally had hopes of beating Katsuki in this fight, had hopes of *'settling the score'* .

This ending, Izuku decides, is better punishment.

Izuku smiles, it's bright but tired.

There were other ways to become a hero. Reo had reassured him of this fact countless times before the start of the festival. Besides, he'd made a promise not to worry his friend as well.

The hero nods reluctantly, raising her hand to address the crowd. The boy's eyes flutter shut. The sun kisses him softly, doing its best to ease his pains. "Midoriya Izuku has forfeited the match! Bakugou Katsuki advances to the finals!"

Chapter End Notes

Oboro Shirakumo has two hands.

It's chapter 50 with the long-awaited battle between Midoriya and Bakugou! I bet it ended a lot differently than some of yall wanted but □♀□ when I set out to write this fic my main goal was to make it as realistic as possible. Midoriya's growing as a person, he knows his limits and knows that his actions affect more than just himself. Or does he?

Stain has made his appearance and it's every bit as bloody as it was in canon. The next arc is sure to be a wild ride and with the end of the Sports Festival Piper's death is sure to make headlines all over Musutafu. I don't think anyone is quite ready for its repercussions.

I didn't intend for there to be a three-week break, but getting my wisdom teeth removed was not as fun of an experience as I thought it would be askdhfjasd. Anyways, I hope everyone enjoyed the chapter, even if it didn't go as expected!

Until next time!

Vela Remnant

Chapter Summary

> The sports festival has reached its end. All of its winners have been decided.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart!!!

taztaztaz-blog x x

divergingpathsverse x

catrical x

kuerbissuppe

fretful-ferret x

“Midoriya Izuku has forfeited the match! Bakugou Katsuki advances to the finals!”

Surprise rolls through the crowd like a rippling wave. But, the cheers the echo through the stadium drown out the murmurs of confusion.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” Bakugou growls, taking a threatening step towards him.

“Forfeiting,” Izuku chuckles, “I thought that was obvious.” He pushes himself up with a pained grunt. Now that the match has ended and his adrenaline is slowly starting to wear off, the burns scattering his body have gained a second wind. Not including his newest near-death experience, it’s been a long while since he’s been hurt this badly.

Recovery Girl’s quirk may save him a few scars, but he’ll be surprised if he didn’t walk away with at least one or two new ones.

“You’re giving up,” Bakugou growls.

“Giving up?” Izuku asks. “I’ve never given up on anything you wanted me to, Katsuki. You failed at that. That’s probably the only thing you’ll

ever fail at."

The teen's jaw clenches as medical bots roll out onto the field with a stretcher that Izuku waves off. He turns his back to the other boy. His jacket is in pieces in the middle of the field, a few feet away from it lies Yaoyorozu's staff. Leaving it feels oddly reminiscent of the USJ.

He pauses in stride, tilting his head back towards Bakugou. "You've got a bright future ahead of you, you always have," Izuku states, smiling at him over his shoulder. "Surely you don't need to beat me to prove that, *do you?* " His word choice is deliberate, a thinly veiled taunt on Izuku's behalf. He knows just how much it'll grate on Bakugou's nerves. Unfinished business, an unofficial win granted only for the sake of formalities. Izuku was not pushed out of bounds, nor was he knocked unconscious or immobilized. He *forfeited* . That was not an indisputable win. There was no ultimate conclusion. There was room for the question of *'what if'*.

Izuku is led off the field with surprisingly little fanfare. There's supportive cheers above him from his classmates and he waves up at them as before disappearing back into the bowels of the stadium. He makes a show of being fine, but as soon as he's out of sight he feels his legs begin to buckle. The medical bots pause beside him.

"Midoriya Izuku. Your physical condition is worsening. Please seat yourself on the stretcher," the robot's voice grates harshly against his eardrums.

Izuku does not ignore its instructions this time, all but collapsing onto the stretcher before laying down. He's so tired.

"We will now continue moving, please keep your arms and legs away from any moving parts or obstacles we may encounter."

Izuku closes his eyes, letting himself be wheeled through the halls. The quiet darkness is only punctuated by the passing of overhead lighting and the mechanical whir of the robots.

Bakugou does not follow him to Recovery Girl's tent, at least, not while Midoriya's awake. He slips in some five minutes after Izuku's fallen asleep. There's a dried trail of blood starting at his brow that winds its way over his eye and down part of his cheek. His nose is swollen and crooked, face and body dappled with newly forming bruises. Shuzenji has certainly seen worse, but to see Bakugou

sporting such wounds is a new experience. Even after the USJ, the boy hadn't been this injured.

She has him take a seat while she looks over his injuries, making sure to reset his nose before activating her quirk. She keeps an eye on him as she finishes a bit of paperwork. Even after healing him, he keeps his tense posture, making a show of keeping his arms folded across his chest and his face set in a scowl. It's then that she catches his straying gaze.

"You two went to the same middle school didn't you?" Recovery Girl asks, taking notice of how the boy's eyes hover over Midoriya.

Katsuki merely grunts, looking away.

"He'll be fine after he gets some rest, in case you were worried."

"I wasn't."

Shuzenji's lips quirk at the corners. "Of course, of course. Now it's best if you rest here for a bit. The others will be playing a few more minigames before the finals start to give you some time to recover, but—"

"I'm fine," Bakugou growls, cutting her off.

She sighs. "You did quite the number on each other, young man. You need to rest if you want to be able to give it your all for the last match. Todoroki has had more time to recover so he'll have an advantage if you try to fight me on this. Pick a bed."

Bakugou does, albeit reluctantly, pick a bed. He passes Mina and her previous opponent, still unconscious from their earlier match, as well as Midoriya and some other kid he doesn't recognize. He picks the bed furthest from everyone else and lays down. Katsuki, however, does not sleep, merely turns his back to the others and pretends to. He keeps his breathing even and slow, his gaze fixed pointedly at the white, leathery plastic of the medical tent.

He lays there silently and he waits. He doesn't know what he's waiting for, perhaps for some big reveal, or an answer, or a fight. He's waiting for some sort of conclusion that he simply can't grasp. But, Bakugou has never been very good at waiting, he's impatient, and prideful, and hates useless and impractical people. And Midoriya Izuku is as impractical as people come, quirkless and desperate to become a hero.

Katsuki's been trying for years to prove to the other that it was stupid for him to dream so big, that his only future in heroics was to serve as cannon fodder. However, the fact that Midoriya had made it UA was merely proof that the last ten years of throwing physical proof at the boy had culminated to nothing. He scowls at the wall.

Their fight had been his chance to completely crush Deku's stupid impracticality, to show him, once and for all, without holding back, what a real hero looked like firsthand. He'd intended an indisputable victory. And then Midoriya forfeited. But, he'd forfeited with a *smile* on his face, like he'd won, like he'd proven something by only making it halfway.

Bakugou Katsuki won. He would have won whether the other boy decided to forfeit or not. So why didn't it feel that way? Why was the sour taste of loss crawling its way up his throat?

"You've got a bright future ahead of you, you always have. Surely you don't need to beat me to prove that, do you?"

But it wasn't his own future that Bakugou needed to prove, it was Midoriya's lack of one.

"If I'm so weak.. then why am I holding my own against you!"

Katsuki suppresses a growl as the tent flap opens behind him. "Tsukauchi Reo," Recovery Girl's voice carries softly, "I don't believe any of the support labs are open today. What could you have possibly blown up to show up here." Her tone is light and teasing.

"That wasn't even my fault," the boy whines with a laugh.

"What can I do for you then?" There's a quiet click of a pen.

"Is Midoriya Izuku still here?"

"Midoriya?" she asks curiously, "Can I ask why you're looking for him?"

There's a shuffling of feet. "We're friends, I was just gonna see if he was awake." Katsuki can feel the teen's gaze boring into his back before they flicker away again, presumably back towards Midoriya or Recovery Girl, he's not sure neither does he care. The Tsukauchi boy's sigh is tired but fond. "It hasn't been that long since he got out of the hospital and he's already hurt again. He really had me worried out there."

“Some of these kids take this whole event way too seriously,” Recovery Girl huffs, “Either way, Midoriya will be fine after a bit of rest. You’re welcome to grab a seat next to him. I plan on having him sleep until the closing ceremony though so try not to wake him just yet.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” Tsukauchi breathes. Bakugou does not see the smile growing on the older boy’s face. “He’ll need all the rest he can get if he doesn’t want to be falling asleep on the podium.”

Bakugou stares at the wall. He continues to stare at the wall. He does not stop staring at the wall until Recovery Girl comes to tell him his match will be starting soon. He pushes himself up, pulls on his shoes, and stares straight ahead as he marches out of the tent.

Deku doesn’t know anything. Bakugou Katsuki was destined for heroics. With just a little more time and training, Bakugou would become the one to surpass All Might himself.

Dippy (affectionate)™

@cancelDUPI

I cant believe Piper died of ligma 😔

6:04 pm · 5/1/32 · Twitter Web App

2 Likes

vee uwahhh @vs_verSUS · 1h

Replying to @**cancelDUPI**

Who’s Piper?

Dippy (affectionate)™ @cancelDUPI · 3m

Replying to @**vs_verSUS**

LIGMA BALLS

Izuku sleeps through the entirety of Bakugou and Todoroki's match. Reo, however, watches the fight on his phone from his bedside. Everything is fire and ice punctuated by blazing explosions that make him wish he was watching it from the stands. Their raw power awes him, these two alone could easily surpass a majority of the current second and third-year hero students. It's a brutal battle, on a completely different scale to anything else he's seen during any of the previous festivals. Even so, he can tell that there's something unspoken happening on the field. He's been friends with Midoriya for long enough to know that the two of them are battling something more than just each other.

He'd recognized Todoroki earlier, going as far as to tease Izuku about their first encounter while Shinsou was getting snacks. But, Todoroki's name was familiar to him for more than that. After the USJ incident, the teen had featured in an article where he vouched for Piper's intentions during the fight. He'd also been one of the last people to see 'Piper' alive. Reo bites at the inside of his cheek. As part of 1-A, Bakugou was sure to have been there too, both of them had surely watched Izuku fighting for his life. Surely they'd seen the near-fatal blow that Izuku had taken firsthand.

He could be wrong of course, but… Reo wonders if they too had already heard the news of Piper's death, or, at the very least, suspected it.

The boy can hear the deafening ring of explosions from the stadium before he sees them happen on screen. They're both fighting for something more than gold medallion, even if Reo can't quite place what they're trying to prove by taking first. A two-story iceberg shoots up from the center of the field and Reo figures that's the end of the match until Bakugou emerges from the ice in a flurry of explosions. Todoroki meets him with a wave of fire when he tries to get in close, blasting him back. It's a brutal fight between future heroes, the perfect balance between flashy and powerful quirks.

It's a close match, but, Bakugou, in the end, is overwhelmed by an incandescent display of ice and fire.

Present Mic's voice crackles loudly through Reo's headphones. "Bakugou Katsuki is thrown out of bounds! Todoroki Shouto wins the match, taking first place in this year's sports festival!"

“–zu. Izuuuu~”

The boy’s eyes flutter open softly.

“Midoriyaaaaa,” Reo drawls, gently rousing him.

Izuku lets out a disgruntled string of incomprehensible words as he rolls over, blinking blearily up at his friend.

Reo smiles at him. “Good morning Sleeping Beauty. Have a nice nap?”

Midoriya groans. “What’re you doing here?”

“I’m here to wake you up. You don’t want to be late do you?”

Izuku throws an arm over his eyes in an attempt to block out the light. “For what?” He’s still tried, drained both from all his fights and from Recovery Girl’s quirk. It’d be easy enough for him to drift back to sleep.

“For the winners’ circle.” Reo grins.

“What?” It sounds like a cruel joke in his ears, but Reo’s never been one for cruel tricks. He peels his arm away from his face, looking up.

“You tied for third, stupid,” his friend explains with a quiet laugh. “It’s about time to went to get your medal, don’t you think?”

Midoirya pushes himself up slowly, as if moving too fast will wake him up from whatever dream this is. Izuku blink at him.

Reo grins. “They’re calling for you.”

Like the silent roar of the universe in motion, the deafening rumble of thousands of voices greet the rising of the winners’ podiums. Tokoyami Fumikage shares the third place pedestal with him. Beside them, on the first place podium, stands Todoroki Shouto. His eyes are downcast, shoulders stiff, clearly at war with himself for something. Midoriya recognizes that same face as one he’s often seen in the mirror. Izuku had been asleep for the final match, but considering the visible scowl etched into Bakugou’s face from the second place stand, he’s sure that their fight had been a brutal one.

Midnight’s voice echoes over the loudspeaker, “Meet your winners! Tied for third! We have Tokoyami Fumikage and Midoriya Izuku! In

second place! The explosive Bakugou Katsuki! And in first place, after overcoming the competition with a masterful combination of fire and ice! It's Todoroki Shouto of 1-A! These are the winners of UA's 2232 Sports Festival! And this year, presenting the first years' medals, it's everyone's favorite hero! All Might!"

Izuku's eyes widen, shining brighter than stars as they watch All Might descend from the top of the stadium, taking his place on the field in a billow of dust and mighty bellow of, "I am here!" The crowd, however loud or excited it gets, pales in comparison to Midoirya's unrestrained awe at once again being able to meet his idol.

Midnight appears behind him with a tray full of medals. He takes one before approaching Tokoyami, his smile blinding. "Congratulations Tokoyami! You've proven yourself to be a strong opponent, indeed!"

"You honor me too highly," the boy murmurs, bowing his head as All Might settles the medal around his neck and pulls him into a firm hug.

"Your quirk is powerful, but it's dangerous to rely on it too heavily," the hero explains, "You won't always be faced with an adversary for which your quirk is a good match."

"Understood."

All Might releases Tokoyomi before receiving another medal from Midnight and turning to Izuku. "Young Midoriya of 1-C! You've shown everyone here what a powerful strategy can accomplish in the face of opponents stronger than you."

He bows his head as All Might slips the medal over his unruly hair. The weight of it settles across the back of his neck, rubbing against his scar. He lifts his head to meet the hero's eyes. Izuku croaks out a hoarse "Thank you," before he's pulled into a hug identical to the one Tokoyami received.

"Should you decide to further hone your physical abilities, I believe you'll become a valuable asset to hero society in the future, young man."

Midoriya bites back the wobble of his lower lip, pressing his face into the hero's shoulder. He doesn't dare wet the man's costume with any tears. "I will."

To All Might these two words mean very little. They are only a reply to his usual encouragement. To Izuku however, they are a promise, a

vow.

He releases him, moves on, bestows Bakugou and Todoroki with their respective medals. Bakugou accepts his defeat quietly and Todoroki accepts victory with a masked sort of reluctance. The sports festival comes to a resounding close.

The announcement of Piper's death is easily buried beneath the wave of excitement following the conclusion of UA's sports festival. The news of the vigilante's death is replaced by the victors of the sports festival, and the blurred images of his corpse are covered by a picturesque moment of All Might awarding medals on the winners' podium. As such, it takes several days before the news of Piper's death *really* gets out. But, as with most things on the internet, all it takes is one post seen by the right people before the revelation spreads like wildfire, before the whole of Japan discovers that the vigilante Pied Piper is dead.

3 · Trending in Japan

Piper's

Trending with **Pied Piper, USJ, HE'S DEAD**

Luck🍀 || READ 📌 @byesexyuhaul · 3h

tw // death , vigilante

Why is no one talking about **Piper's** death until now?? Like I get that it was announced during the sports festival, but its been DAYS! HIS BODY WASHED UP ON SHORE APRIL 29TH AND THE POLICE STILL HAVEN'T RELEASED A CAUSE OF DEATH!!!! SOMETHINGS GOING ON HERE

Silver / GOING DARK @pipersimp · 1h

HE'S DEAD?? YOURE TELLING ME THAT **PIPERS** DEAD DEAD???

Luciii @miruko_mi · 1h

tw death , police

You guys aren't taking **Piper's** death seriously enough and here's why, a □:

let me start this off by saying this is definitely some kind of coverup by the police/hero commission, Piper goes missing mysteriously after being hurt at the USJ? How does that (1/?)

Fyre - HES DEAD 🎉 @flamingfyrefist · 58m

no because **pipers** had this coming, y'all can stay mad, idc if this is all a coverup or not, that bitch was hurting HEROES

he deserved what he got

Tuesday @updates_orelse · 2h

Does no one else find it weird that the police waited until the middle of UA's sports festival to announce Piper's death?? They literally chose the time where the least amount of people would be able to hear about it.

Cryptid | Jackalope @DesertCrytpid · 2h

Pipers dead, twitter is in shambles, and i just spilled chimichurri all down the front of my stove

Able 🍎 @CannibalisticApple · 1h

there's so much debate going on about **pipers** body, why is it so hard for the police to release the cause of death????

Belgan @ commissions @piiperrsiimp · 34m

Now I know y'all aren't actually donating to that "**Piper's** gofundme" bs, HE'S DEAD, WE DON'T EVEN KNOW HIS IDENTITY TO BE ABLE TO SUPPORT HIS FAMILY, WHAT ARE Y'ALL ON 😩😩😩

Eli 📌 CHECK PINNED!! @eee_eeio · 12m

Posting this again because it's getting buried under a lot of info threads, but here's the gofundme that's been set up for **Piper's** family, please rt to spread the word and link it under posts about him

Musutafu Mourns for Vigilante Pied Piper

By Akihito Jun

May 4, 2232

In a press conference held last Saturday, the Musutafu chief of police confirmed the death of the beloved vigilante Pied Piper. Civilian government workers discovered the body early morning, Saturday, April 29th whilst conducting a routine survey of Dagobah beach. After calling it in to the police, detectives arrived on the scene and confirmed the victim's identity to be that of Pied Piper.

Piper, while notorious for many things, is perhaps most recognizable for his involvement in the USJ incident three weeks ago (which can be read about in one of my previous articles here). After escaping police custody in the wake of the incident, Piper would disappear off-grid for several weeks. With no reported sightings and without any solid leads, the vigilante was be labeled MIA. Following the event, theories concerning his condition began circulating the internet, a surprising number of which had predicted Piper's possible death. However, no one expected what police now assume happened to the vigilante. In a direct quote from Musutafu's chief of police, he says, "It's suspected that, after his escape, Piper was unable to have his wounds healed and as a consequence, was picked up by either a group of villains or someone working on their own." Despite this, the exact cause of the vigilante's death, as well as his civilian identity, and what events took place following Piper's escapes from the USJ, are still unclear.

However, this lack of information does not prevent Pied Piper's supporters from mourning his loss. Since the news of the vigilante's

death, well over a dozen memorials have been erected throughout the city. Appearing most commonly in the impoverished neighborhoods that Piper was known to patrol. Other memorials have taken shape at some of the vigilante's notorious fighting spots. The largest memorial to date, however, appears around the perimeter of Dagobah Municipal Park, the location where Piper's body was originally discovered.

In a show of goodwill, local hero Death Arms made an appearance at one of the two memorials within proximity of his office, something which has recently been met with backlash from fans. Many feel that the hero's presence was disrespectful to the memory of the vigilante in light of the recent indictment Death Arms faced for use of deadly force against the vigilante whilst in the presence of civilians. Several of UA's staff were also spotted at different memorials throughout Musutafu. The voice hero: Present Mic and space hero: Thirteen were both seen offering gifts at the memorial that has recently taken shape at the outside perimeter of the USJ. Pro hero Snipe was also spotted at a memorial, offering his condolences yesterday at the location featured in one of Piper's viral escape videos that Snipe appears in.

The people that Piper saved throughout his time as a vigilante are the hardest hit of the growing number of mourners as news of his death only continues to spread. In an impromptu interview I had with a man by the name of Genji Kohaku, he relives part of his encounter with the vigilante. "He [Pied Piper] never even told me his name. He just showed up, beat up the guy that was wailin' on me an' made sure I was okay. He didn't want nothin', didn't expect nothin'. I was so out of it that I never even got to tell him thank you," Genji explains, "I wish I could've. You always see people thanking Pros, but I'm sure that guy didn't hear it too often. He deserved better." Online, people with similar stories are making their own encounters with the vigilante known, only able to thank him after the news of his passing has spread.

"Criminals will celebrate that kid's death, I'm sure of it," one anonymous commentator offers over the phone late last Tuesday night. I couldn't help but find myself agreeing with the statement. The vigilante Pied Piper, while no longer with us, continues to live on in the hearts of many. No matter one's thoughts on vigilantism, Piper's presence will be made permanent by his many accomplishments. His memory will undoubtedly be honored by those he positively impacted in the community for many years to come.

[Disclaimer: Both Musutafu Hero Reporting and its writers neither support nor condone any form of illegal activities including that of vigilantism.]

© 2232 Musutafu Hero Reporting, a division

of Musutafu Daily Network, LLC.

Napht

@m0thh0urs

GUYS I SWEAR I DIDN'T FUCKING KNOW, THIS IS BULLSHIT STOP LIKING IT

> **Napht** · 4/13/32
>
> @m0thh0urs
>
> rip **Pied Piper** he's not dead i just miss him

4:26 pm · 5/4/32 · Twitter Web App

976 Retweets **139** Quote Tweets **18.6k** Likes

Tea Time @sippinonurtears_ · 1h

Replying to @**m0thh0urs**

NAPHT NO

chug jug w/ u @pissTcup · 33m

Replying to @**m0thh0urs**

quick, what lottery numbers should i pick im

trying to buy more hero merch /j

fahara @thebootydiaries · 48m

Replying to @**m0thh0urs**

WHAT THE FUCK NAPHT

fae.exe @exeexeexe · 1h

Replying to @**m0thh0urs**

YOU, YOU DID THIS. HOW DARE YOU. /lh

Ashy @PLMBH · 26m

Replying to @**m0thh0urs**

💀 💀 💀 where is the /j 💀 💀 💀

Caee @ikiit · 37m

Replying to @**m0thh0urs**

rip piper, you would've loved hearing about the dude that broke into Death Arm's flat just to shit in his bathtub 💩

Chapter End Notes

YOOOO IT'S ONCE AGAIN TUESDAY AND I'M ONCE AGAIN BACK WITH A NEW UPDATE!!! I honestly didn't think I'd make this one since I was sick as hell on Saturday, BUT I DID IT ANYWAYS
With this chapter, the sports festival is officially over. Our winners have been crowned and we earn a bit of insight into Bakugou's hellscape of a head.
Piper's death has finally reached the mass public and their reactions are focused on getting answers.

ANYWAYS, I HOPE YOU ALL ENJOYED THE CHAPTER, I CANT WAIT FOR THE UPCOMING ARCS, NOW IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GO PLAY THE NEW MINECRAFT UPDATE ASDKJFHASDJKFAKSDF
Until next time!

Interstellar Medium

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart!!

divergingpathsverse

a-blu-jay x x

fretful-ferret x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x

The first day that Midoriya wakes up to find his vigilante persona plastered on the tv is when everything really sinks in. Today is what's supposed to be everyone's first day back since the sports festival. The time off gave him time to sleep in and further recuperate from the bone-deep exhaustion that'd set in after his injuries had been healed.

The two days off had evidently given the news of Piper's death time to spread as well. That's the only explanation for why news of it is being aired on tv right now.

Izuku glances nervously at his mother, watching for any kind of reaction. She's busy cooking breakfast for the two of them, and even though the television is only on as background noise he can't shake the fear that she'll make some sort of connection between the two of them.

"It's terrible what happened to him," Inko frets as she goes to set the table. "That's the same vigilante Detective Tsukauchi came to ask you about all those months ago. Do you remember that?"

"…Yeah," Izuku answers hesitantly as another story is announced.

"In other news, Hero Killer Stain injures another pro in Hosu. Turbo Hero: Ingenium was hospitalized after a routine patrol found him face to face with the self-proclaimed vigilante. This is the villain's second accredited attack on heroes in Hosu–"

"Izuku, it's ready."

Midoriya turns from tv, stomach uncomfortably tight. He's not hungry

anymore.

Early Monday morning, several hours shy of the start of school, twelve pro heroes and eight lead detectives gather in a private meeting room at the back of Musutafu's Police headquarters. With them is Hattori Rikku, a representative of the Hero Commission's Tokyo branch. Hattori is a serious-looking woman. She's young still, but there's an aged air about her that prevents anyone from so easily underestimating her.

She takes her place at the front of the room, sleek black hair falling around her shoulders, bright hazel eyes analyzing those gathered around the table. "As many of you may have already heard, Iida Tensie, hero alias: Ingenium, was admitted to the ICU after encountering the hero killer Stain last Saturday. Yesterday we finally managed to get an agent in to talk with him." She looks calmly around the room. "He is one of the only heroes to survive an attack from Stain. As such, we did our best to meet with him as soon as he was awake for any possible information."

Aizawa watches the woman carefully. If he's being honest he's not entirely sure why he and Mic are here. The school day starts in three hours and both of them are missing out on precious sleeping time.

"I don't understand why you're debriefing us on this incident," another hero pipes up, voicing Aizawa's own thoughts. "If you intend to deploy us out to Hosu, just know that the higher-ups won't allow for it. Pied Piper's case has gone viral over the last several days and the chief is intent on closing it as quickly as possible."

There's a beat of silence as Hattori stares the hero down cooly. "He's coming to Musutafu."

"Iida Tensei?" the hero questions.

"Stain," Hattori states, correcting him.

Murmurs start-up throughout the room.

"What?"

"I thought he attacked in threes? Ingenium's only his second victim in Hosu."

"Do you think there was one that didn't make the news?"

“There’s no way.”

“Then what made him move locations so quickly?”

“Who, is the better question,” the agent states, silencing the room. She steps to the side, allowing everyone a view of the screen behind her as it flickers to life. "It’s like you said. On April 29th, the day that Ingenium was attacked, two government employees discovered the body of the vigilante Pied Piper washed ashore on Dagobah beach. According to what Ingenium told our officers, this is the reason that Stain is headed to Musutafu.”

More murmurs spread through the room. Beside him, Mic subtly brushes a hand against Shouta’s knee. Aizawa figures it’s encouragement of some sort, but he ignores it in favor of listening in on everyone’s conversations.

“Were they friends or something?”

“There’s no record of those two ever meeting up.”

“Stain sees himself as a righteous vigilante,” the agent explains, the murmurs once again dying out, “In that sense, it could be that he agreed with Piper’s ethics and saw him as someone deserving of his respect.”

“So you think Stain’s out for revenge?” Aizawa asks monotonously from his seat.

Yamada glances at him nervously.

“It’s possible certainly a possibility. There are already several theories circulating the internet that heroes are to blame for Piper’s death. With Stain’s ideology centered on corrupt heroes, it’s likely that he may agree with them.”

On the other side of the room, Detective Nakajima lets out a deep sigh. “That brat’s been a pain in everyone’s asses for the last year and his death has just been a cherry on top of the shit pile he left behind. Here I thought it couldn’t get any worse.”

Present Mic scowls. “You’re forgetting Piper was still only a kid.”

“He knew what he was getting into,” the detective huffs.

“Need I remind you,” Mic seethes, leaning forward in his seat, “that

that *'brat'* saved who knows how many lives at the USJ, Eraser's included. Piper is someone that we had a duty to *protect* . We failed him, both as heroes and as adults."

Hattori eyes the two of them. "This isn't the time to argue with one another."

"Where's Detective Tsukauchi?" Shouta asks more calmly from his seat, burying the lower half of his face in his scarf as he studies the man. "If this links to Piper's case then he should be here as well."

Nakajima leans back in his seat as Yamada forces himself to relax. "It's been two years since that man took a proper vacation day, so of course he decided to take all of them off at once. Don't know how the chief cleared him to do so, but I'm glad they did. I'll say it as many times as I have to until someone finally listens, *he was too close to Piper's case* ."

Aizawa lets his eyes fall closed as irritation settles in, but says nothing more. He just wants to sleep.

At the opposite end of the table, a hero he vaguely recognizes crosses their arms. "Can we get back to Stain? It doesn't matter why he's coming here. What's important now is making preparations before he gets here. Things like sending notices to all the local hero agencies and making sure no one goes out alone are a must. Considering Stain's history I'd suggest at least three heroes per patrol."

"That's an unsustainable number," Hattori replies, "As preferable as it would be, it's simply not realistic for a lot of agencies. However, notices will be sent out over the next few days with advisories for heroes not to go out by themselves. The number of patrols will have to increase as well. If word gets out that Stain is suddenly killing heroes in the name of Piper then all eyes will fall on the Hero Commission," she glances towards Mic and Aizawa, "as well as on UA and other related organizations. This is something we want to avoid if at all possible. Stain tends to express his ideology through actions rather than words, so the reasoning behind his relocation will hopefully remain confidential. The Hero Commission, however, has already begun to take preemptive measures should the information get out and has started cracking down on all major news outlets. Nevertheless, rumors are bound to spread."

"Why is it so important that it's kept a secret?" another hero asks." Piper is in high standing with the public at the moment, if it's

revealed that he could've been in collaboration with Stain wouldn't that help us?"

"It's more complicated than that," Nakajima cuts in, "Anything that comes out about Piper is bound to be scrutinized by the public. Piper escaped custody more times than I can count on my hands, if it comes out that he might've been more villainous than they initially thought it could reflect back on us."

"I don't see how that affects *heroes* ."

"Enough," Hattori interjects, glaring at the two. "The Hero Commission has already decided that it would be in everyone's best interest if the information didn't get out. Now instead of pointlessly arguing about it let's talk possible decoys. If we know who Stain is likely to target then our chances of successfully laying out a trap for him rises exponentially—"

Midoriya meets Reo at the rainy train platform, a sly smile present on the older boy's face. "Hello, Mr. Third Place, fancy meeting you here."

Izuku chuckles, shaking off his umbrella and elbowing him gently as he passes. "Very funny."

Reo's smile sobers momentarily. He grabs at the boy's shoulder, pulling him to the side, voice dropping to a whisper. "You've seen the news right?"

Izuku nods with a grimace, not looking at the other teen.

"What are you planning to do?"

Midoriya bites at his cheek, silent. "Ignore it," he murmurs reluctantly, "People will have to forget him eventually." Something achingly empty swells behind his breastbone.

A mournful expression crosses Reo's face. " *He* did a lot of good. He saved people. They won't forget you as easily as you think they will, Izuku."

Midoriya glances up at him with a small, sad smile. "Maybe."

The corners of Reo's lips turn down.

"We'll miss the train," Izuku reminds him, pulling gently away from the boy's grasp.

“Right,” Reo murmurs reluctantly.

Midoriya fully expects this somber mood to suffocate them the entire train ride to UA. However, he doesn’t account for being recognized some five minutes into their trip.

“Hey, kid.” Izuku looks up at the feeling of a soft tap on his shoulder. “You’re the one that fought that explosion kid at the sports festival right?”

Midoriya looks at the man in surprise. “Uh– yeah, that’s me.”

“Man, I’m glad I didn’t get you confused with someone else!” the man laughs heartily, clapping a hand on Izuku’s shoulder. “You did great out there!”

The boy’s eyes widen, smile twitching at his lips. “Thank you .”

“No one in my family’s got flashy quirks. So watching you stick it to ‘em got my kid real excited.” The train slows to a stop and the man glances behind him. “That’s my stop. Just know we’ll be rootin’ for you in the future, kid!”

Izuku looks up at Reo in surprise.

Reo smiles at him softly.

“Hey,” a woman calls out from nearby, “What that guy said, you did great out there. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise, alright?”

“Yeah!” someone else pipes up, “I was so surprised by that plan your team pulled off in the second round!”

“That was you? Thought you’d be taller.”

“Congrats on third place!”

“It’s Midoriya right? What class were you in again?”

“That last match was brutal.”

Izuku takes a hesitant step back, giddy with embarrassment. He looks to Reo for help, but only receives a lighthearted laugh in return. There’s a silent “you’re on your own” that’s communicated between them. Midoriya scowls at him playfully as someone comes up to ask

for a picture. It's not an unusual request to someone like Piper, but it's a first for the boy named Midoriya Izuku. Reo crams into the back of the picture, holding up bunny ears behind him. Izuku bats at the older teen, laughing. Reo merely takes the hits with a grin.

Arriving in class he receives much of the same treatment as he did on the train ride here. There's a chorus of congratulations, high-fives, and slaps on the back. Shinsou greets him with a mischievous grin as he finally makes it to his seat, cheeks flushed from the sudden attention. "Don't forget me when you're famous," Hitoshi teases.

He lets out a surprised laugh. "I would *never*– " Izuku states dramatically, pretending to check the palm of his hand, squinting down at it. "– *Shinto Hiroshi."*

Shinsou snorts, hiding a smile behind his hand as Present Mic slips into the room.

"Goooood morning, little listeners!" Yamada calls. "You all did a great job at the sports festival! Congratulations to Shinsou, Zheng, and Midoriya for making it into the final event!"

The room erupts into cheering and Izuku smiles shyly, glancing back at Shinsou before he finds Zheng a few seats over. He catches her eye, offering her a bright smile that she does not return. His own smile falls in confusion. A sinking feeling settles in his chest, but he's quick to shake it off, smile returning as Yamada starts homeroom.

Classes go smoothly after that. There's idle talk between subjects, most of which he spends bantering with Shinsou. He keeps an ear out for the talk circulating the rest of the room. None of it, thankfully, is related to Piper. Because of this, he's actually able to fully focus on listening in class for what feels like the first time since transferring to UA. His classes with Cementos and Ectoplasm pass in the blink of an eye and before he notices it, it's already time for P.E.

Aizawa, thankfully, isn't their P.E. teacher for today. Vlad King welcomes them with a few strong claps. "Congratulations on your placements in Saturday's sports festival. I must, however, remind you all that quirk usage is not allowed during this class. I figure you're all smart enough not to try and pull anything, but stupidity is an unfortunately common problem among students after the sports festival every year so I'll warn you all just in case." He claps once more, eyes roaming over the gathered students. "Now, because your

class, unlike the other general education courses, had three people make it into the third event, you'll be playing a game instead of running laps. Split into two teams, I don't care how to do it, just make sure the teams are even."

Cheers go up through the group in excitement as people rush to clap the three of them on the back in celebration.

Midoriya collapses on a bench next to Shinsou, surprisingly tired after the class's game of flag football. He'd had fun though, laughing when the two teams had fought over which side he should be on before Vlad King had been forced to intervene.

"You good?" Shinsou asks with a raised brow.

"Yeah. I'm still just a little out of shape from being in the hospital for so long," Izuku sighs, leaning back to stare up at the ceiling.

"That's understandable. I don't know how you'd consider yourself out of shape though," Hitoshi huffs. "Save a little muscle for us weaklings, yeah?"

Izuku chuckles but says nothing more as he lets his eyes flutter shut. Sneakers squeak sharply against the court as the game continues without them.

"Get her!"

"Ozaki, toss it over here!"

"Matsuda!" Vlad's voice booms over the court, "Try that again and you're disqualified!"

"Sorry, Sensei!"

Midoriya smiles softly at the sounds of controlled chaos.

"Are we sure he's actually quirkless?" someone murmurs quietly behind them. Izuku feels himself stiffen, eyes slowly peeling open. The sinking feeling he'd felt during homeroom returns in full force. "He seemed pretty strong."

"That's what Zheng told everyone."

Izuku's pulse quickens, breath shuttering in his chest. He'd known that

the information would come to light eventually. He'd been prepared for it from the moment he'd set foot in UA. Somehow he must've forgotten, lost in the fantasy that was UA where no one knew him, where he wasn't tripped or pushed into walls, where his desk wasn't vandalized and his belongings weren't blown up or thrown out windows.

"Maybe he just has a quirk he doesn't know about."

The hushed words feel like a punch to the gut. Shinsou watches him carefully from the corner of his eye. "Hey." Hitoshi's head tilts towards the two boys in the bleachers behind them. "Shut the fuck up."

Izuku's head snaps towards his friend, bewildered.

"Shinsou." Vlad King calls from the courtside. "Language." He does not turn to look at them, marking down on his clipboard as Midoriya's team scores another point.

Shinsou merely shrugs, unbothered. "They were being annoying."

Midoriya bites at his cheeks, bowing his head. "Thanks," he murmurs softly.

"Don't mention it."

Lunch is a happier ordeal, but the events from P.E. linger like cigarette smoke, clinging to his clothes, his skin. Reo takes immediate notice of the quiet, somber mood he's shrouded in. He doesn't, to Izuku's relief, ask about it, however. Instead, he smiles bright enough for the both of them and does what he can to lift Midoirya's mood. By the end of lunch, the three of them are all laughing as usual with newfound plans to hang out sometime within the next few weeks outside of school. It's only when lunch is over that Izuku pulls Reo to the side with a promise to explain what happened later.

The next few classes pass quickly and soon enough their last subject of the day has come and gone.

"Shinsou," Yamada calls as everyone finishes packing their things. His smile is bright. "Aizawa wants to talk with you for a moment before

you leave today. He should be in the teachers' room by the time you get there."

Shinsou nods in understanding. "Of course." He shares a look with Midoriya as he slings his backpack over his shoulder. They slip out the door together.

"Any idea what that's about?" Izuku asks, both curious and mildly concerned.

"Nope."

Midoriya glances at him worriedly. "You want me to stick around till you're done?"

"I'll be fine, no need for both of us to miss our trains."

"You sure?"

"I doubt it's anything important," Shinsou reassures him, "At worst he'll get onto me for cursing during class or something."

"If he does just blame me for it," Izuku states as they push through the crowded hallway.

Shinsou huffs out a laugh. "I'm not a snitch, Midoriya. Besides, if I was gonna blame anyone it'd be those two pricks from P.E."

"I'm sure they didn't mean anything by it," Izuku replies nervously.

His friend eyes him skeptically. "Whether they meant anything by it or not doesn't matter." Shinsou sighs, "I should apologize to you."

Midoriya looks over at him in surprise.

"I think I probably pissed Zheng off during our match," the boy explains, "She might be trying to take it out on you since we're friends."

Izuku bites at his lip, thinking back on his interaction with the girl from this morning. "I'm sure you only did what you had to do to win. Did you apologize to her?"

"Tried to. She flipped me off in the hallway afterward and stormed off. I'm fine with her hating me, she's got every right to be mad after some of the shit I said. But, there's no reason for her to be going around spreading stuff you obviously don't want people to know

about."

"I knew it'd get out eventually," Izuku chuckles somberly. "Just wish I could've made it a bit further into the school year."

"Just because it was bound to happen doesn't mean she had a right to be the one to do it."

"It could've been an accident."

"If it was an accident then she should've told you and apologized. I saw the cold shoulder she gave you in homeroom. If she tries anything else let me know and I'll try talking with her. I doubt she wants anything to do with me, but the least she can do is leave you out of it," Shinsou states. He sighs, pausing at the stairs. "Alright, well the teachers' room is on the next floor up. I'll text you once I'm out."

"You sure you don't want me to stick around?" Izuku asks hesitantly.

Shinsou waves him off. "I'll be fine. Tell Reo I said he smells."

Midoriya snorts, covering his choked laughter with a fake cough. "Of course."

"If I don't get a strongly worded text from him later then I'll know you didn't tell him."

Izuku only laughs, waving as Shinsou starts up the stairs. "See you tomorrow!"

Shinsou raises a hand without looking back. "Bye, Midoriya."

"Shinsou said you smell."

Reo gapes at Izuku as he approaches. " *That's* the first thing you say to me?"

Midoriya only grins. The train ride back home is unsurprisingly just as chaotic as it was that morning. It gives Izuku little time to think and no time to explain anything to Reo about what had happened during P.E. like he'd promised to. He doesn't mention it at all, but he knows Reo will be expecting a phone call sometime later this evening to make up for it.

They part ways on an upbeat note, but it doesn't take long for the

feeling to wear off.

Izuku takes a detour on the way home, hoping that a walk will help clear his mind about the Zheng situation. He'd been able to momentarily forget after meeting up with Reo again, but now that he was once again alone with his thoughts, there was nothing else to distract him. Despite his hopeful expectations earlier, he can't help the bitter feeling that swells inside him. There's no telling just how many people Zheng told about his quirklessness and whether or not she'll tell more. It'd be one thing if she'd only told one or two people but the words, " *that's what Zheng told everyone* " implies otherwise.

The two boys from before hadn't been particularly malicious with their words, but they'd cut deep nonetheless. UA wasn't Aldera, he's been reminded of this fact over and over again since the first day of class. He'd been assured by Nezu himself that the things that had happened at his middle school would not be allowed to happen here. Even so, Izuku is warry to believe such promises, though he doubts the staff would let anyone's behavior surpass that of which he suffered at Aldera.

The boy sighs, the acrid stench of sea salt and garbage mingling in his nose. It seems he'd reached Dagobah. Old police tape still cordons off both the pier and the way down to the shore. It flutters in the sea breeze, catching his eye with a harrowing sense of melancholy. But, it's not the only thing that catches the young boy's gaze.

Midoriya hesitates on the sidewalk opposite of the memorial. He stares at it for a long time, unsure what to do. He'd read about them of course, seen a few pictures sprinkling his timeline. Something inside him, however, had never quite believed in their existence.

He checks both ways before crossing the street. There's only three other people nearby, two women and a little girl all standing together. He's horrified to recognize the two adults as people he'd saved as Piper. What he assumes is their daughter crouches in front of the fence, a bright red ribbon clutched in her hand. She reaches out, tying it around one of the fence's poles. She claps her hands together after she's finished, offering a quiet prayer that he can't hear from this distance.

He watches them go numbly, waiting till all three of them have left before taking their place. Izuku, still somewhat unsure how to react to what he's seeing, kneels gently in front of the memorial, looking on in dazed awe. Burned-out candles and dying flowers take up most of the

lengthy stretch of sidewalk, but stuffed in between them are an endless number of assorted offerings. There's food and drinks all piled in one section, different snacks that he'd sometimes buy while on patrol, alongside a few bags of McDonald's.

"I don't even like McDonald's," Izuku chuckles dryly.

There are a few framed pictures of him scattered around as well, sometimes with fans or people he saved, sometimes just alone. There's drawings next to short notes next to full-length letters. There's soggy origami birds and stuffed animals among other small, random tokens.
Behind them all, tied to the fence, is a multicolor array of what must be hundreds of ribbons, all of which serve as a harlequin backdrop for everything.

Some of the ribbons have words on them. He reaches a hand out, fingers brushing gently against them. He sees a lot that say simple 'thank you's or 'I'm sorry's. In the end, it's the little girl's red one that manages to catch his eye.

He reaches for it reverently, untying it from its spot on the fence. He flips it over in his palm. Its message is a simple one. ' *My hero* '. It's been written on with sharpie and he can tell by the handwriting that the child had written it. The last character is a little smeared, but Midoriya cherishes it all the more because of it.

Part of Izuku wants him to take everything here with him, demands that he leave behind nothing. Numbers, words on a screen, these two things are hard to quantify. But, everything left here was left by someone whose life he impacted in some way. He'd told Reo just this morning that people would forget. And they will, human memory is flawed, within six weeks Piper's death will have already been forgotten by the majority of people. Within six months Piper's presence will have disappeared from online spaces altogether.

Midoriya thinks he understands Reo's reasoning behind saying people wouldn't forget him so easily now. It's hard not to after seeing such mournful support outpouring from the community. Izuku pushes himself up, knees aching from kneeling for so long. He dusts his pants off, staring out past the mounds of discarded garbage to the crystalline sea beyond it.

Izuku steps reluctantly away from the memorial, gently tucking the ribbon into his pocket. The others dance on the wind, waving in what only he realizes is their final goodbye. The people's message had

reached him loud and clear.

People will forget Piper as is predetermined by human nature. Izuku doesn’t doubt this. But, if some people still remember him, years after he’s passed, well– Midoriya doesn’t really see a problem with that scenario either.

Chapter End Notes

It's 3am on a Wednesday, but it's Tuesday somewhere.

Until next time

Stellar Nursery

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart!!

hopeful-blogger x x x x

fretful-ferret x x x x

Shinsowo ⟩

Today 4:13 pm

MIDORIYA

SHINSOU!

what's up?

HE OFFERED TO TRAIN ME???

what?

who??

AIZAWA, HE SAID HE'D TEACH ME HOW TO FIGHT

YO????

WHAT??

THAT'S SO AWESOME SHINSOU

10/10 DESERVED

THANKS

Izuku leans back in his desk chair, something sour welling up in his throat, but just as quickly as it appears, he swallows it down. He lets it dissolve and disappear. He's proud of Shinsou, happy for him beyond all measure. This would bring his friend one step closer to becoming a hero.

He'd been worried after the sports festival that Shinsou, whose only hope of heroism had lied in UA, might fall to the wayside and be forgotten. And Midoriya, who had surely destroyed his chances at taking home gold in one fell swoop, would be to blame. Izuku, upon being denied his entry to the hero course had turned to vigilantism and he'd be damned if he inadvertently led anyone down the same path he'd only just sloughed off.

He'd been prepared to extend the hand that Izuku had so desperately needed the year prior. Now, it seemed, that Midoriya wouldn't have to.

There would be others like he and Shinsou though, others that would be shunned for their desire for heroism. Izuku's dreams have stagnated. But, he refused to let them stay that way for long. Things would not come easy for him, Izuku was used to this fact. He would fight now so that those that come after him won't need to. His success would become the extended hand he needed. In order to achieve this he was prepared to overcome all obstacles in his way.

"I'll meet you at the finish line," Izuku murmurs, a determined grin blooming on his lips as he glances down at his phone, "Make sure you're there to meet me."

2 am comes and goes with Aizawa staring at the living room's aircon. Shouta's determined not to move again for the night, but the couch has always been uncomfortable to lay on for long hours. That's why Oboro had teasingly demanded they keep it once it'd been discovered.

" *It makes sure you always come to bed* ."

Even so, he can't bring himself to sit up and head back to the bedroom. He'd slipped out over an hour ago, unable to sleep, but too exhausted to do anything but lay around. He closes his eyes desperate for sleep, but is instead only greeted by waking nightmares. He opens his eyes again tiredly, staring up at the ceiling once again. The red light on it blinks at him lazily.

"You said you wanted to save people, right?"

Aizawa curses, pushing himself up.

"My class is up there, they could use some protection."

He presses the palms of his hands against his eyes, sighing. "Why'd you have to go and die on me, kid."

"Shouta?" Oboro shuffles into the living room, voice raspy from sleep.

"I'll come back to bed soon," Aizawa murmurs to reassure him, hoping that it'll be enough to send him back.

But Oboro Shirakumo, therapist of five long years, knows when something's wrong, especially when it concerns his husbands. "What is it?"

"Nothing."

Oboro stands guard just out of sight without a word. Aizawa thinks the other man's gone back before the sound of shuffling feet draws closer instead of moving away.

"It's not your fault."

Aizawa must've heard those words a thousand times by now. His reply is almost instinctive, "I know." He's not sure if he believes it or not.

Oboro lowers himself onto the couch next to him. "He was probably the same age as we were when my accident happened, wasn't he?"

Aizawa keeps his hands pressed against his eyes, saying nothing.

"Those kids I saved that day… I've said it before, but I don't regret doing so. Even though it destroyed everything I'd hoped for as a kid, if I was given the chance, I'd do the same thing all over again." Oboro stares straight ahead. "I bet it'd be the same for Piper. From the news I've seen, from the stories you've told. I think that he too, if given the chance, would still choose to save you."

“He was just a kid, Oboro,” Shouta murmurs. “He shouldn’t have felt like he needed to save anyone.”

“I know,” the man sighs, running a soothing hand across the other’s back.

Aizawa leans towards Shirakumo, tiredly resting his head against the older man’s shoulder. His eyes are bloodshot and his scar stings vehemently. “You didn’t see what they did to him. And now Tsukauchi’s disappeared and the new lead detective doesn’t give a shit about Piper. We just found out that Stain’s on his way to Musutafu as well and the kids’ internships are coming up next week and I’ve stupidly decided to take on another student from general education again.”

“You’ll catch who did it,” Oboro reassures him gently. “Just make sure you don’t overwork yourself. Know your limits and remember to rely on others. For now,” he states, “just rest.”

“I don’t think I’ll be able to sleep,” Aizawa sighs.

“You never know.” Oboro presses a gentle kiss onto the top of Shouta’s head, murmuring softly into his hair. “Come to bed. Put on some music or a podcast, if you fall asleep to it then you fall asleep.”

On the other side of Musutafu, Tsukauchi Naomasa sits alone on his balcony. It’s quiet in their part of the city. There are a few cars that pass on the street below, leaving trails of white and red that are punctuated by the occasional whine of distant sirens. On the table beside him is an unopened pack of cigarettes that he can’t bring himself to open.

Naomasa glances over his shoulder into the living room. The door is open, giving the apartment a chance to breathe. Sansa is curled up on the pullout couch. He’s pretending to be asleep, but they’ve been friends long enough that Naomasa can tell otherwise. The ticking swivel of his ears every time Nao shifts around is enough of a giveaway.

He sighs. “You can go to sleep. I’m not going to do anything reckless.” He looks away again, observing the city skyline.

There’s a long beat of silence punctuated by a short sigh. There’s a creaking rustle from inside as Sansa slips out of bed. His paws fall softly against the floor as he pauses in the doorway, leaning against it.

“I know you won’t.”

“If you know then go to bed.”

Sansa doesn’t reply, coming to take the seat in the chair beside him instead.

They sit in silence for a long while, watching the city flicker with life.

“You have work tomorrow,” Naomasa reminds him.

“I’ll be fine.”

“It’s two in the morning.”

Sansa sighs, turning to look at the man. A car passes below, headlights revealing the detective’s sorrow struck face. He’s wearing a pinched expression, lips pressed in a thin line, brows furrowed. He’s not watching the city anymore, eyes fixed pointedly at his lap.

“You’re more important to me than a few missed hours of sleep.”

“I shouldn’t be,” Naomasa murmurs hoarsely.

Naomasa Tsukauchi is a plain man with looks that make him easily forgettable to strangers. But, he loves more deeply than anyone else Sansa has ever met. He loves indiscriminately with the heart of a thousand suns, embracing those that others hate, extending his hand to the people society shuns. Because of this, he is also a man with much to lose.

And Piper, Piper had been a devastating loss.

Sansa’s whiskers twitch with mild annoyance. He stands, silent as he steps in front of Naomasa. “You are. You always have been and you always will be.” The feline crouches, taking the man’s hands between his own. Sansa gently lifts them, pressing their hands to his forehead. “Even if you don’t believe it yourself, I can believe enough for the both of us.”

He looks up to find nothing but heartbreak in Naomasa’s eyes. “You’d have to make up for my lack of belief as well. It’s reached the negatives, you know?” Naomasa chuckles hoarsely.

Sansa stands again, gently cupping Naomasa’s face. Below them, another car passes. “I know.”

“I don’t know how long it’ll take… to get back to normal, or if normal is even an option anymore.”

“I’ve got nine lives,” Sansa hums, gently bumping his head against Nao’s. “I’m willing to spend all of them waiting if it’s for you.”

“You’ll change your mind eventually,” Nao breathes.

“Maybe,” Sansa teases softly.

His yellow eyes are twin suns that have pulled Naomasa into orbit. They are steady, unwavering. They are everything that Naomasa is lacking. They are everything that Naomasa needs right now. Gravity pulls them closer. Naomasa falls deeper.

Their breath mingles.

Their lips brush.

The universe sings.

r/vigilantes · Posted by u/goldenboiz 7 hours ago

STAIN IS COMING TO MUSUTAFU

1.5k upvotes

WTF WTF WTF WTF WTF WHY ISN’T ANYONE TALKING ABOUT THIS, WHY ISN’T IT ON THE NEWS??????? IM BACK WITH MORE INSIDE POLICE INFORMATION FROM MY COUSIN WHO WORKS WITH THE MUSUTAFU POLICE AND HE SAID HE OVERHEARD SOME OF THE HIGHERUPS SAYING THAT STAIN IS ON HIS WAY TO MUSUTAFU

ARE THEY SERIOUSLY TRYING TO COVER IT UP??

.

cowboyroundup 1.2k points · 7 hours ago

Bro calm down, unless you’re a hero you don’t have anything to worry about with Stain

.

boat_hobo 15k points · 6 hours ago

Shouldn't this be in r/heronews or r/villains?

.

measuringcup_M1LK 34 points · 4 hours ago

BRO WHAT

.

snipes-assless-chaps 5k points · 4 hours ago

i mean there's lots of reasons for them to try to cover it up

.

spacejunk13 2k points · 5 hours ago

WAIT, YOU MEAN LIKE STAIN STAIN????? LIKE HERO KILLER STAIN????????? COMING TO MUSUTAFU????? THE HOME OF UA?????????? BRO I SWEAR IF HE GOES AFTER ANY OF MY FAVS I'LL CRY HE ALREADY GOT INGENIUM

.

Dominique_Icefall 1.2k points · 3 hours ago

interesting that he's coming here right after Piper's death was announced

.

al_miteo 467 points · 32 minutes ago

who's piper??

.

fairy-06 7.8k points · 1 hour ago

I SAID THAT HE MIGHT COME HERE AS A JOKE, BUT I DIDN'T THINK IT'D ACTUALLY HAPPEN

.

FUTErsight 7.8k points · 5 minutes ago

“Iida.”

UA’s lunch line is always a minefield of sorts for Midoriya. There’s always that slim chance that he’ll be stuck next to someone he’s trying to avoid, ie. Bakugou, and more recently, a handful of the kids from 1-C.

Today, however, he thankfully doesn’t have to worry about this. He’s found himself smushed between his friends and Iida.

“Hey, Iida,” Shinsou chimes in from behind.

The teen turns to face them, pleasant surprise on his face. “Midoriya, Shinsou, it’s good to see you again. Also, Midoriya, congratulations on your placement in the sports festival. I had to leave before I saw your fight against Bakugou, but I hope he wasn’t too vicious.”

“It was pretty brutal,” Izuku chuckles.

“He was like a feral pomeranian,” Shinsou cuts in.

Midoriya laughs, elbowing him good-naturedly. “But,” Izuku continues, “he’s never been one to hold back. Most people tend to underestimate me so it felt good to go all out against him.”

“Of course.” Iida nods, holding out his tray for Lunch Rush. He murmurs a, “Thank you,” before returning his attention to Izuku. “I can’t relate completely. But, I do understand your feelings.”

A small smile fights its way onto Midoriya's face as points to what he wants and Lunch Rush fills his plate. "You know," Izuku starts brightly, "I think you'll make a great hero one day, Iida. Make sure you help if you ever see me in trouble, alright?" he teases, smile morphing into a grin.

Iida, however, dons a tight smile. "I'll do my best to live up to your expectations."

Izuku freezes, shifting to remedy the situation. "Hey," he says reassuringly, "don't feel pressured to live up to *anyone's* expectations. No one has a right to ask for anything more than your best."

Shinsou chuckles from his other side, doing what he can to lighten the mood alongside him. "Midoriya, our school slogan is literally plus ultra."

"Okay, well maybe they need to change it then," Izuku huffs dramatically, keeping Iida in the corner of his eye.

"Does that mean you're also going to tell Spain that they need to update their motto?" Reo butts in, leaning out from behind Shinsou, a shit-eating grin in place.

"Spain?" Midoriya splutters.

"Why do you know this? Is this just common knowledge to you?" Shinsou asks with a laugh, looking back at the older boy.

"Combining memory quirks with the internet was a mistake, honestly," Reo hums light-heartedly.

"Thank you for your advice, Midoriya," Iida cuts in, "I'll keep it in mind." Iida grabs a set of chopsticks, offering them one last, "Have a good day then," before breaking away from the line.

"You too, Iida!" Izuku calls after him, picking up his own tray. He bites at the corner of his lip, concerned he'd accidentally driven the boy away.

"I'm sure he'll be fine," Shinsou reassures him, picking up on the uneasy tension on Izuku's face.

"You didn't do anything wrong, Izuku," Reo leans down, murmuring in his ear. He's quiet enough so others can't overhear.

Shinsou studies them with a raised brow, but says nothing as he leads the way to their table.

“He’s got a lot going on right now with his brother,” Reo explains. Midoriya tilts his head towards him as they walk, brows furrowed in confusion. He catches Reo’s pensive expression from the corner of his eye. They lock eyes with one another briefly before Reo pulls away. He need only say one name for Izuku’s confusion to shatter violently: “Ingenium.”

Pied Piper’s Death And Why It’s A Coverup

#piedpiper #vigilante #news

2,638,249 views · 1 day ago

LilacMinds

197K subscribers

After police held a press conference discussing the discovery of vigilante Pied Piper’s body, word spread and people began to question the legitimacy of the story. In this video, I’ll be discussing the flaws in their story as well as popular theories on the disappearance and death of

SHOW MORE

Comments 2,384

📌 Pinned by LilacMinds

LilacMinds 1 day ago

For anyone who didn’t catch the announcement on twitter earlier, just want to give you all a heads up that my upload schedule is going to be

changing soon. I plan on moving the weekly uploads to Tuesday due to some conflicting irl stuff.

Mail Maam 1 day ago

Rest in peace Piper, we'll figure out the truth

Zao [oaZ] 23 hours ago

YO WTFFFFFF

Ap• ll • 937 5 hours ago

fake

Jeanbestxx 10 hours ago (edited)

Can people stop trying to blame heroes for this, that dude shouldnt have put himself in the position where he could end up like this

Simple as that

H a l f - a l i v e 1 day ago

I really enjoy your content! Thank you for your hard work!! Can't wait for Tuesday :)

Goda Akira 5 hours ago

4:53 Like fr if they don't want us to suspect them, then just give us the full story

AquaticAnalyst 21 minutes ago

i agree that this whole situation feels off, but i also don't think the police set this up like some people believe. it's too complicated of a plan, it has too many moving parts and too many ways it could blow up in their face. like you said i definitely think if any of the "good guys" are behind this then it's more likely that the her/o com/mission. that or maybe what the police are saying is

Read More

Velcrocrunch19x 16 hours ago

Face reveal soon pleaseeeeeee 🧐

sunniebeam 4 hours ago

it never even occurred to me that this could be some sort of coverup, ive gotta send all my friends this video now

the-database-says-youre-stupid 2 minutes ago

found you

Midoriya feels a little nervous making his way to the dojo. It's his first day back since the sports festival and as much as he expects a round of congratulatory responses, he feels a strong sense of anxiety. As close as he feels to most of the people in the dojo, he hasn't told actually told any of them of his quirklessness. He'd managed to avoid the question for years now thanks to how little time there was for leisurely talk during lessons. And, aside from Gamon and Hirano who he texted occasionally, there was no one he actually talked with while outside the dojo. He'd hoped for a similar situation while at UA. But, the sports festival had, although indirectly, exposed his quirklessness to what he can only assume is the entirety of class 1-C. And now, he worries that the same thing might happen with his dojo.

Zheng isn't here to spread any rumors, but the fact is that he'd placed third in the sports festival without any obvious signs of quirk usage. With as long as he's been at the dojo, the question is sure to come up if people start to recount his fights.

Izuku sighs, shaking the thought off as he passes the dojo's front window. Everything is seemingly business as usual until Gamon spots him through the glass, pointing out his arrival to Hirano whose head whips around just in time to catch him pushing through the door.

"Midoriya!" Hirano rushes at him as soon as he's inside. He doesn't even have the time to slips his shoes off before he's being lifted off his feet by one of the most enthusiastic hugs he's ever received. "You won!"

There's a clamor of other voices congratulating him, calling out questions.

"I tied for third," Izuku reminds her with a wheezing laugh.

"Exactly!" she shouts, "You won!"

He can hear Gamon laughing somewhere behind them as Midoriya is dropped back on his feet. He throws the teen a playful glare as he finally gets a chance to slip his shoes off.

Gamon pulls Izuku into their own hug. "How'd it feel finally getting to meet All Might? Was it everything you hoped for?" Gamon teases.

"Better, actually," Midoriya laughs.

"That was so cool!" one of the younger kids calls out

"Yeah! How do did you do that one thing in the team match?"

"Listen, I wanna know how you handled that explosion kid!"

"Tell me you were scared! There's no way you weren't scared!"

"Midoriyaaaaa, you have to teach me how to do that kick thing you did!"

"You even got to hug All Might, not fair!"

"You'd think Hawks just flew through the window with how loud it is," Ji-Woo calls from the back of the dojo, silencing the sudden commotion as she makes her way across the mats.

"Sensei," Izuku greets as she gets closer.

"Everyone back to their places."

“You did great,” Gamon grins, giving him one last pat on the back before slipping away.

The woman stops in front of him as the crowd disperses. She smiles gently, holding her hand out. “Congratulations, Midoriya. You made us proud.”

Izuku takes her extended hand, shaking it with a smile that rivals the sun. “Thank you.”

“Now,” she states with a mischievous smirk, “I’d love to see you sign up for one of the next competitions.”

Hattori Rikku is two minutes late to her meeting with Principle Nezu. He, however, does not so much as bat an eye at her tardiness.

She bows in greeting. “I apologize for running late.”

He waves the apology off with a paw, motioning for her to take a seat. “Nevermind that, would you like some tea? Or coffee perhaps?”

“Neither, thank you.”

Nezu nods, slipping out of his seat. “Straight to business then,” he states, “Though I hope you don’t mind if I make a cup for myself.”

“Not at all.”

He sets to heating the water before speaking again. “So,” the principal starts, “Do we have any word on Stain’s whereabouts yet?”

“No, but we are working under the assumption that he’s already in Musutafu. If this is the case then we have two weeks at best before he makes his move.”

“Indeed, based on his *modus operandi,* he’ll want to spend ample time research his targets before he does anything. If the rumor that he’s come here for Piper is true, then his next targets will likely be someone either closely related to Piper’s disappearance or someone that he was publicly at odds with.”

“Do you believe some of your staff could be at risk of attracting Stain’s attention?”

A smile twitches at Nezu’s lips. “You wouldn’t have asked for this meeting if you hadn’t already thought of the possibility. Excluding

Eraserhead, I do believe some of them may be possible targets. My staff are all upstanding heroes, but we failed in safely securing an injured child in need of help, vigilante or no. That alone could be cause for Stain's eye to turn on us."

Hattori leans back, crossing her legs. "With that kind of criteria, any hero that Piper's come into contact with in the past could be at risk of catching Stain's eye."

Nezu nods solemnly. "Indeed." On the table between them a timer dings. He smiles. "That'll be the tea."

Chapter End Notes

Until next time o7

Syzygy

Chapter Summary

> I let the discord server help decide what the boys should do. This is what they came up with.

Chapter Notes

> Tw :// fire

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart!!

Viridian_ukiyo

Mintii

Fola x x

catrical

a-blu-jay x x

hopeful-blogger

fretful-ferret x x x x x x x x x x

[please let me know if any of the links aren't working, discord's being finicky with some of the previous ones so I've been trying to figure out what's going on]

“It’s a little warm in here.”

Reo slowly turns to look at Shinsou, face carefully blank, expression unreadable. A fire alarm whines obnoxiously above them. “The building’s on fire,” he states bluntly.

While everyone else is rushing for the exits, the three of teens have found themselves somewhere to stand out of the way. They wait as everyone else evacuates, watching as the flames flicker on the other side of the counter. They’re still small right now, but they’re too big to be put out with anything less than a team of firefighters.

Izuku grins beside him. “Guess you could say this Denny’s is pretty lit.”

“This is a Mcdonald’s.”

Midoriya pats his friend’s back reassuringly. “In spirit, Reo. Always in spirit.”

Shinsou motions towards the exit with a cup of fries. “Look, everyone else is gone so we can leave now, it’s fine.”

Izuku stares at the boy like he’s grown a second head. “Where did you get that?”

“Get what.”

“The *fries* , Shinsou,” Izuku says, motioning dramatically at the container, “We didn’t even get to place our orders.”

The teen shrugs. “No one else was gonna eat them.”

Izuku enters a contemplative silence as Reo quickly ushers them outside, only speaking again once Reo’s deemed them to be a safe enough distance away. “Can I have one?”

Shinsou looks down at him, unimpressed. “Get your own.”

Izuku hesitates at this, glancing back at the building. Reo’s hand latches firmly to the back of his shirt. He does not stop looking forward, dragging the boy with him. “Midoriya Izuku, don’t you dare even think about going back into that building.”

“Why,” Izuku whines, “It’s just a small kitchen fire, you saw it.”

“Try it and I’ll make sure you know how the other end of a taser tastes.”

Izuku gapes at him in shocked horror. “You wouldn’t.”

“Oh, I definitely think he would,” Shinsou confirms immediately, eating another fry.

Izuku throws his hands up in defeat as they cross the street. They stop on the other side to watch the chaos as a small explosion rocks the surrounding area, blowing a hole through the roof of the restaurant.

Shinsou crosses his arms, leaning back against the building behind

them. “Wow. It’s really on fire, huh.”

Izuku nods solemnly. “Yeah.” There’s a short pause. “So what do we do now?”

“We could go to the mall,” Shinsou suggests.

“How are you going to say that knowing that we didn’t get to eat,” Izuku whines, knocking shoulders with the boy.

Shinsou laughs brightly, “If you were just gonna say let’s go eat then why’d you even ask.”

“I was being *nice* . Just because you stole some fries–” Izuku huffs.

“ *Stole?* No, no, no. I paid for these with *emotional trauma* , Midoriya. We barely escaped with our *lives* ,” Shinsou states, a broad grin slipping in place.

Beside them, Reo finally cracks a laugh, able to relax now that they’re out of danger. “I hate both of you.”

“I feel touched,” Shinsou replies, biting down on another fry.

“Aww,” Izuku coos, “I love you too, ReRe.”

“I’m still mad at you, don’t push it.” The warning is accompanied by a halfhearted glare.

Izuku only laughs, turning back to watch the restaurant burn as firefighters finally arrive. “If we don’t leave now I’m going to start withering away,” he informs the others, glancing at the two of them.

Reo slips out his phone, quickly looking for nearby restaurants. “Looks like there’s a café nearby that we can go to.”

“I’m desperate,” Izuku replies with a sigh, “I’ll take anything.”

“Okay,” the boy clarifies, “I’m not this desperate.”

Reo looks over at him, a shit-eating grin in place. “You said you were hungry.”

“And you said this was a café!”

“It is a café!” Reo laughs.

Izuku throws his hands up in exasperation. “A maid café!”

Reo smiles easily at their waitress. “I’d like a chibi order of the Neko Nachos with a Pretty in Pink lemonade to drink.”

Shinsou stares at the menu for a moment longer before ordering. “I’ll take an Umai Omelette with a coke.”

Izuku hides behind his menu. His cheeks are a flaming red, voice barely above a whisper. “Hamburger steak and water please.”

As soon as the waitress leaves Reo busts into laughter. “ *Your face!* ”

Izuku peaks at them over the top of the menu. “You hate me.”

The teen shrugs. “You said you were hungry and this was the closest place.”

“We literally passed a ramen shop on the way here.”

Reo makes a face. “Who eats ramen in the summer.”

Izuku sets his menu down carefully, a deadpan expression taking over. “It’s May.”

“It’s summertime somewhere,” Shinsou butts in.

“Why are you taking his side!” Izuku cries, letting his head fall into his hands.

“It’s because watching you get flustered so easily is funny,” Shinsou explains.

Reo nods in confirmation. “I’m glad Shinsou and I agree.”

“This isn’t fair! How come neither of you are embarrassed?”

“What,” Reo teases, “Are the pretty girls dressed in maid outfits too intimidating for you?”

Izuku splutters out a few incomprehensible sentences as the waitress drops off their drink orders. “Shinsou!” he manages eventually, “How’s training with Aizawa!” It’s a desperate attempt to keep the

attention off himself. Thankfully, it works.

“I want to say it’s going great, but he’s strict with the training regiment,” the teen chuckles, leaning back in his seat. “I felt like I was gonna die after that first lesson. The good news is that I am getting stronger though, I bet I could even take you on now.”

Izuku laughs, bright and mirthful. “It’s not even been a *week* .”

“Guess we’ll just have to spar sometime if you don’t believe me.” Shinsou crosses his arms over his chest, playful overconfidence and mischief curling the corner of his lips upwards.

Izuku grins. “Guess we will. Sounds like good practice for my upcoming tournament too.”

Reo looks up at him expectantly. “Oh? Did you actually decide to sign up for it?”

The younger teen nods, taking a sip of his drink.

“Six years of Muay Thai and *this* is your first competition,” Reo sighs. “How’d your instructor react?”

Izuku recalls the surprised flare of the woman’s freckles. “I think she’s more excited for it than I am,” he laughs.

“It’s pretty soon isn’t it?”

“This Sunday,” Izuku confirms as the waitress appears again, this time with food in hand.

“Alright,” she announces, “I have a chibi order of Neko Nachos, an Umai Omelette, and the Hanahaki Hamburger Steak! If you need anything else please let me know.”

As soon as she walks away Reo takes his chance. “Izuku,” Reo rags, “why don’t you ask for her number?”

Izuku splutters over his drink. “Why aren’t you bothering Shinsou like this,” he cries, pointing an accusatory finger towards the lilac-haired teen.

Shinsou’s grin widens. “I’m gay and aromantic, try again.”

Izuku throws his hands up in defeat. “Next time,” he declares, pushing himself up, “We’re all going to a multi-gender maid café and I’m

making you suffer with me!”

A playful smirk twitches at Reo’s lips. “I didn’t know you liked maid cafés so much.”

Izuku freeze, before falling back into his seat, staring defeatedly at the ceiling. “I can’t win,” he groans. He rights himself, taking a mournful bite of his food.

“So you’ve really never been in a competition before?” Shinsou asks over the rim of his drink.

“Never saw the point in it,” Izuku mumbles. “Most of the ones held in the past were all Muay Thai competitions, but this one is mixed martial arts, so it’ll have a whole range of fighting styles. There’ve been some before as well, but I was stupid and determined not to enter any. Experience is the best teacher though so it’ll be good exposure for me.” Izuku takes another bite of food, finally at peace now that he has food.

Reo eyes the other teen. “Do you want to come?” Reo asks around the food in his mouth.

The boy blinks, glancing at Izuku who nods along fervently, cheeks puffed out with hamburger steak.

Izuku quickly swallows his food, nearly choking on it in the process. Reo pounds his back a few times as he tries to settle his throat with a few sips of water. “It goes on for most of the day,” Izuku coughs, “but the matches for the older kids start around five-thirty. From what my instructor said the whole tournament will go on until about nine.”

Shinsou suppresses the urge to smile, pretending to think it over. “Sunday it is then,” he finally concedes, “You’ll have to tell me where we’re meeting though.”

“It’s a date,” Izuku grins.

“Midoriya, I don’t do dates,” Shinsou replies mischievously.

The boy flushes a bright pink. “You know what I mean! It’s a plan! We have a plan! Why do you hate me!”

Vialin bot

@vialin_bot

Hero Killer Stain was spotted in Musutafu, Japan last Sunday night, May 7th, 2232 at approximately 11:32 pm. Photo evidence of him was captured on the southeast edge of the third district. As of yet, there are no known victims.

2:37am · 5/8/32 · Twitter Web App

2 Retweets **17** Likes

Sansa eyes the ringing cell phone from the corner of his vision. The caller ID is the same name as the last time. “This is the third time Yagi’s tried calling,” he reminds Naomasa gently. “It could be something important.”

“He’s just going to offer his condolences,” Naomasa sighs, dismissing the idea. “He’s a great friend, but I don’t think I can handle it right now.”

“You want me to text him for you?”

There’s a short beat of silence as Naomasa contemplates his answer. Eventually, he bobs his head in agreement. “Thank you,” he murmurs quietly, tiredly leaning against Sansa’s shoulder. “I’m sure he has good intentions…” Naomasa murmurs, “but–”

“It’s fine,” Sansa reassures him, “Well-meaning or not, you don’t owe anything to anyone. Take care of yourself before worrying about someone else’s feelings.”

The smallest of smiles twitches at Naomasa’s lips. “Yeah.” He’s quiet for a moment, staring absently out the balcony doors. “Misaki invited us to dinner today. Do you think we should go?”

Sansa glances down at him, studying his expression. “Do you feel up for it?”

“I don’t know,” Naomasa murmurs softly, “But… I’d like to see them.”

There’s a moment of silence before Sansa responds. “I’m sure they’d like to see you too.”

lilacminds reblogged 4am-ramblings

vigilante-just-d-ance Follow

I'M GOING TO PISS MYSELF, SO WE ALL KNOW THE STORY ABOUT THE PERSON WHO BROKE INTO DEATH ARMS APARTMENT JUST TO SHIT IN HIS BATHTUB RIGHT? WELL RECENTLY SOME INFO WAS LEAKED ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE BREAKING INTO HIS APARTMENT TO DROP A FAT SHIT ON HIS LAPTOP TOO

evillplatypus Follow

I'M SORRY WHAT?? 😱😱

ladynagant-mybeloved Follow

THIS DUDE REALLY CAN'T CATCH A BREAK, KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK TEAM

sluthsideoftumblr Follow

what op said was true! there was info leaked about someone breaking into Death Arm's apartment to shit on his laptop BUT!!! did you also know that it was a lie??

DON'T LEAVE I PROMISE IT GETS BETTER

someone on twitter did some digging into the incident, turns out there was never any police report about a second break-in at Death Arms apartment. Weird right?? But do you know what there was a police report of?? *Unlicensed quirk usage by a third party.* What was the quirk called you ask? *Persuasion, the quirk is called persuasion*. Someone did *not* break into Death Arm's apartment, *no no no*, here's what *actually* happened. Some undisclosed individual *used their quirk to make **Death Arms** shit on his **own computer***

10sloot01 Follow

THERE'S NO FUCKJBG WAY THIS ACTUALLY HAPPENED

dortiegreen Follow

I didn't think this post could get any better

TantrumThrower Follow

shut up

SHUT UP

YOU'RE JOKING

pepopep0 Follow

WAIT WAIT WAIT, NONE OF YOU ARE EVEN ASKING WHY THE LEAKED STORY WAS DIFFERENT FROM WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED, I BET DEATH ARMS LEAKED THE 'EDITED STORY' BECAUSE HE KNEW PEOPLE WOULD EVENTUALLY FIND OUT AND HE WANTED TO COVER UP THE FACT THAT HE TOOK A FAT SHIT ON HIS KEYBOARD 😱😱😱

4am-ramblings Follow

@lilacminds sorry for the @ but i thought you'd appreciate this :)

#vigilantes #pied piper #piper #death arms #da the da #you dont understand just how long i laughed at this shgsmsgsjsjw

407,632 notes

Shirakumo Oboro is an impenetrable fortress. No matter what words exit Izuku's mouth, his expression does not change. He is calm and steady, and though he creates an open and welcoming atmosphere, he is also carefully closed off. He's a man that's already heard all there is to hear. That's why, from Midoriya's perspective, Shirakumo is a man that's lived several lifetimes.

"Society has a rather negative stigma around coping mechanisms."

The man crosses one knee over the other, leaning back in his seat. “But in truth, coping mechanisms are the body’s way of protecting itself from a situation that’s causing you stress or anxiety,” Shirakumo explains reassuringly, “Unfortunately, sometimes these coping mechanisms aren’t good ones, and even though they may help with the situation at hand, they have a possibility of causing problems of their own.”

Midoriya looks away anxiously. “Everyone was always worried about me,” he says quietly, guilt bubbling up at the base of his throat. “I know what I was doing was bad now, but I honestly thought it was helping…” Shame swirls in his gut. He’d treated Reo like a diary for over a year, every secret Midoriya had to share had been shared with him. Without realizing, he’d done nothing but hurt his friend.

Shirakumo gently shakes his head. “Putting yourself in dangerous situations is never a good thing, but what you did wasn’t bad, Midoriya. You were protecting yourself in the only way you knew how and that’s nothing to be ashamed of. Understanding that a coping mechanism isn’t healthy is both the first and hardest step towards getting better.” At first glance, Shirakumo Oboro is nothing but his scars. He was an ageless man with a countless number of untold stories that Midoriya wanted to hear. He was both childlike and ancient. Blind in one eye and face painted with three long, claw-like scars cutting through his brow. That’s all Midoriya had been able to see upon those first few moments. But, Izuku’s sure that his smile alone has the ability to light up solar systems. “I’m proud of you for being able to do that.” It’s a smile as gentle as the turn of the universe.

Midoriya feels something break softly inside his chest.

He bites back a wave of tears that threaten to overwhelm him. He bows his head, hiding the turmoil on his face. “I had help,” he croaks.

“Even so,” Shirakumo says warmly, “You were the one to make the final decision. No one else can make that decision for you.”

The voice of his mother echoes in his head. *“…no one else can do it for you! You have to choose to be stronger than the weakest part of yourself, Izuku!”*

Midoriya nods shakily, biting at his bottom lip.

“What comes now is finding a new, *healthier* way to deal with the problems you’re having.”

If Midoriya's being honest he's never really thought too much about his mental health. Maybe it was his way of avoiding his problems. It was easier for him to pretend that his problems didn't exist than it was to face them. That's why he hadn't been able to see his vigilantism for what it was, a glorified and unhealthy *coping mechanism* . He would not make the same mistake again.

"Are you ready?"

He gives the man a determined nod. The vigilante Pied Piper was dead and Midoriya Izuku was the one left in his place. Giving up vigilantism was the start of a new chapter for him, and, with the help of the man before him, this would become the first page.

The leaf had been turned.

It's Shirakumo's eyes darting towards the clock on the wall that tips the boy off to the time. He peeks at his phone, checking it for himself. Their session was almost at its close.

"Before you leave today," the man starts, "I'd like to congratulate you on your placement in the sports festival." Shirakumo's smile is light and easy. "You did great out there."

Midoriya feels himself flush, muttering a soft, "Thank you."

"You told me that you were nervous beforehand," he adds, "How are you feeling now that it's over?"

"Better," Izuku murmurs truthfully, "I, uh– I think I was able to work through a lot of things that were bothering me."

"What kinds of things?"

The boy shifts nervously. He knows there's no pressure for him to answer any of the questions being asked. Shirakumo certainly wouldn't hold it against him, *hadn't* held it against him. But… putting everything into words has helped him before. "I was… well." Midoriya fiddles anxiously with his hands. "Bakugou, the last person I fought, we don't uh– get along." Izuku starts, deflating a bit. *What an understatement,* he thinks to himself. He's never told anyone the full story between them, even Reo knows nothing about it. Despite how long it's gone on, he still doesn't feel ready to admit what happened out loud. "It wasn't like closure or anything," Midoriya murmurs

softly, looking away, “But, I managed to get some stuff off my chest and settle a few of the internal disputes I had going on.”

“Is that part of the reason why you forfeit?” Shirakumo ask.

Midoriya chuckles dryly. “That and I thought it would make him mad.”

He waits for the boy to continue.

“I just– I don’t know. It felt good to finally put it into words. I probably said a few unnecessary things though,” he explains shyly. *“Any more than this and the people who care about me will start to worry. They’ll think I’m trying to kill myself again.”* Midoriya winces at the memory with a benign smile.

“Do you regret it?” Shirakumo asks.

“Regret?” Midoriya shakes his head with a laugh. “I don’t think I could even if I wanted to.”

“Then it wasn’t unnecessary,” the man says simply. His eyes flicker towards the clock. “Midoriya,” Shirakumo states, leaning forward, “What you said was necessary for *you* to hear just as much as it was for you to say it to this person. You proved something to yourself that day,” he stresses, “and whatever it was, I have a feeling that it’ll be indispensable to your future growth.”

thirstyc4tus reblogged bootmaa

Midnight0Sky Follow

There was a nearby McDonalds that caught fire today and someone took this picture of people evacuating and im GOING TO CRY

[Image ID: Picture of three teens exiting the front doors of a burning McDonald’s. The two on the left both don a bored expression as the middle boy with purple hair is pictured eating out of a half-empty carton of fries. The third teen, stationed on the right, simply looks annoyed.]

THE MIDDLE GUY IS SUCH A MOOD, MY FATASS WISHES XE COULD PULL THIS OFF

boldedfont Follow

FJGDKHFLJGH HELP THE LAST PERSON LOOKS SO DONE WITH EVERYTHING LMAO

moonie-man-ta-tee Follow

is no one else gonna mention that the dude on the left is very subtly eyeing the middle guys fries?? mans was hungry 😩 😩

poggychamp1e Follow

ISNT THAT GREEN HAIRED GUY THE ONE WHO PLACED THIRD IN UA'S SPORTS FESTIVAL?????????? IM SOBBING

#tag yourself im the guy in the middle #q

12,537 notes

Chapter End Notes

The chapter's a bit short this week, BUT!! TRIO CONTENT POG! I was having trouble coming up with ideas for what they should do and upon asking the discord they suggested I set the opening scene with a building on fire, very pog of them honestly, and Shinsou's become an internet meme because of it as well!! Overall very happy chapter! Very pog! I wonder how long it will last □

Until next time!

Absorption Nebula

Chapter Notes

> After a peaceful outing with Shinsou and Reo, and a visit with his therapist, Izuku prepares for his upcoming martial arts tournament and Naomasa readies himself for a family dinner.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart!!!

mintii-x

Jackalspine

blackholeca

fretful-ferret x x x x x x x x x x x x

DesertCryptid

Naomasa looks impossibly tired. Misaki can tell the moment he sets foot in the apartment. Her brother has always been a rather private man, as was a common trait in the Tsukauchi household. Even so, she knows how attached he'd been to his job in recent months, or more specifically, to the young vigilante he'd been trying to catch.

She'd seen the news. Everyone had seen it. It's the main reason she'd planned such a last-minute family dinner. As the oldest of the three siblings, she needs him to know that he's not alone.

Tamakawa Sansa, however, the only one of Naomasa's coworkers to have received more than one invite to the Tsukauchi family dinner, thankfully seems to have beaten her to the punch.

"Tamakawa!" Misaki's grin is bright as she ushers the two men inside. "Nao said you were coming, it's good to see you again!"

"Sansa's fine, and it's good to see you as well," the feline greets, velveteen smile pulling at the corners of his mouth.

Misaki pulls her brother into a tight hug. "I'm glad you came," she murmurs. The man hums gently against her shoulder as Misaki rocks them back and forth for a moment. She'd steeled her heart before

they'd arrived, prepared to see a broken man inhabiting the body of her younger brother.

Naomasa looks tired, it's true, but he looks better than Misaki had been expecting. He looks fully fed and freshly showered and that's all she can ask for from him after everything.

She has an inkling that she has Sansa to thank for it.

Misaki eventually releases him, leading them into the kitchen. "Reo! Sansa and your uncle are here!" Reo peeks his head out of his room, dressed in a fresh button-up. His cheek, however, is smudged with a blueprint outline of his most recent project.

Misaki laughs softly. "Go wash your face off."

Reo's brows furrow in momentary confusion before he catches his reflection in one of the hall mirrors. He flushes, covering his cheek with a hand.

Naomasa chuckles. "Busy as ever, I see."

"Of course," Reo murmurs before shyly slipping into the bathroom.

Misaki leads the other two towards the table as he disappears. "The food's ready so feel free to grab a plate."

Reo returns soon after, cheek red.

They fall into idle chatter as they eat. Sansa and Misaki do most of the talking until Reo's dragged with a question about school.

"Speaking of school, I haven't seen Midoriya in a while," Misaki says, "How's he doing?" She turns back to Sansa with an explanation. "Midoriya's one of Reo's friends." The smile that sneaks across her lips is a knowing one. "I'm sure you'll meet him at some point if you come to a few more dinners. He's over here often enough. He was one of the first years that placed third in UA's sports festival."

"Every time we take the train he gets recognized," Reo chuckles, "He's been struggling to handle the fame."

"I'd bet," Misaki replies, helping herself to another small serving of rice.

"He's actually got his first martial arts tournament this weekend," Reo adds nervously.

His mother raises a brow. “His first? I thought he’d been training for a few years now?”

Reo only shrugs, taking another bite of food in favor of answering the question. “The event is free for family, but since it’s just him and his mom he got us three tickets as well.”

Naomasas’s brow rises gently in surprise. “Three?”

Reo nods. “You don’t have to use it, but he got one for you as well. Remind me to give it to you before you leave.”

“I don’t know if I’ll be able to make it.”

“Even if you can’t, I promised I’d give it to you.”

Dinner ends quietly and their guests don’t say longer than it takes to clean the table. Reo hands off the tournament ticket as they leave, Sansa’s hands full of uneaten leftovers. In the hall, Naomasas pushes the elevator’s call button. The ticket burns a hole in his pocket.

“Do you think I should go?” he asks softly.

Sansa shifts his hold on the food in his hands. “To the tournament?”

The detective nods silently.

“‘Should’ is too strong of a word. The better question is: are you ready to go? I’m sure there’ll be a lot of reminders there that you might not be ready to see just yet,” Sansa warns. “So, you’re the only one that can answer that.”

Naomasas doesn’t respond, watching instead as the elevator doors pull open in front of them.

r/villains · Posted by u/764dleted one day ago

Stain in Musutafu??

354 upvotes

Evidently Stain is in Musutafu and you know what, I’m blaming it on whatever happened to that one popular vigilante because honestly why else would he come here of all places

.

ihatesummer 474 points · 12 hours ago

“whatever happened to that vigilante” bitch he DIED

.

helpits_monday 16k points · 5 hours ago

The fact that Stain has been such a heavily followed topic in the news recently only to suddenly completely drop off the radar after he attacked Ingenium is honestly setting off a lot of red flags. There hasn’t been much that could’ve acted as a catalyst for him to change locations so suddenly so I honestly kind of agree with you on this. There’s been a lot of theories circling the internet because of Piper’s popularity, and I’ve definitely seen a few posts here and there about this being a cover-up for some sort of assassination from the Her0 Ass0ciati0n. It’s possible that Stain could’ve heard about it or that he knows something we don’t about what happened. Either way, from Stain’s point of view there were probably a lot of people, both heroes and police, that he could find blame with in relation to Piper’s death. A lot of high profile heroes could be implicated in Piper’s death so I’m curious to see who Stain thinks could be at fault

edit: I’m not excited guys, obviously I don’t want anyone to die or get hurt, but if he really does know more about what happened to Piper than us and we figure out who he’ll target, then it could lead to a breakthrough in Piper’s case

.

sunflowerkit 2k points · 2 hours ago

bro someone needs to fess up quick before one of my faves gets killed

.

Iida_T4793 3 points · just now

So Stain is in Musutafu?

Izuku stares at the comments, horror dawning across his face. His stomach turns over, a queasy feeling overcoming him. Izuku hadn’t been following Stain’s case as closely as he normally would have. He’d been trying to avoid any stories that might have tempted Piper’s resurrection.

That was his mistake.

He'd been aware of Stain, aware of his victims. He hadn't, however, been aware of the rumored respect he held for Izuku's vigilante persona.

He reads the words again: "from Stain's point of view there were probably a lot of people, both heroes and police, that he could find blame with in relation to Piper's death".

It was just a theory, just a rumor. But, Izuku agreed that it was weird. Why *was* Stain in Musutafu? As far as he was aware, Stain was notorious for his patterns. There were never less than three attacks per prefecture. But, there'd only been two that Izuku has heard of and a quick search on his computer confirms his fears. There was a reason for Stain to be in Musutafu and the only recent event of note was the death of the vigilante Pied Piper. The world took the news harder than Izuku could have expected.

His eyes flicker towards the red ribbon tied to his backpack.

He can only pray that Stain hadn't been one of the ones affected.

UA's presence in Musutafu attracts a great deal of tournaments to the area. He contributes this to the reason why the MMA tournament he's participating in is only a short train ride away.

Midoriya Inko is a nervous woman by nature, but the moment the building he'll be fighting in comes into view he can feel her nervous energy turn palpable. Izuku laughs softly at the look on her face as he pushes through the front door and they go to check-in. "The sports festival was ten times worse than this will be," he reassures her.

She fiddles anxiously with her hand as they're pointed where to go. "Even so," she murmurs, "I didn't get to watch that from the stands." She swats at him playfully. "You didn't get to see how much of a wreck I was."

Izuku's teasing grin melts into a kind smile. "I promise nothing you see today will even compare to then."

Ji-Woo meets them halfway down the corridor, duffle bag slung over her shoulder.

“How’d the younger kids do?” he calls.

The corners of her lips turn upwards, freckles glowing softly. “Just as well as I expected. Ito took first in her division.”

Midoriya nods happily. “I figured she’d do well if she ended up sticking around the dojo.”

She and Inko exchange greetings before Ji-Woo leads them further inside the building. They come out at the top of an arena. Thousands of seats extend out around them, encircling the court below. Most of the seats, however, are empty. There’s two octagonal rings set up on the ground floor at the center of the arena, two fights already taking place inside of them. “The later the night gets the more people that will show up,” Ji-Woo explains as they make their way down the steps to where a majority of the crowd resides. “The older kids always draw bigger audiences. When I was younger the crowds weren’t nearly so big, but UA’s sports festival has skyrocketed the popularity of competitions like these even with quirks being banned. It’s not unusual to see some of the kids in the older divisions end up working as pro heroes though, so I guess it’s not too huge of a surprise.” She scans all the seats as they pass. “I’d say at least half of all the empty space you see now will be filled up before the end of the night.”

Cheers go up from the crowd as one of the fights is determined below.

“They’re just now finishing up with the 13 and 14-year-olds so it’ll be a while before your weight class is up. You can watch some of the matches until then.” Chee Sensei offers him a firm pat on the back. “It’s your first time coming to one of these right?” She looks between both him and Inko.

Izuku nods.

She smiles. “I’ll let you enjoy it then. I’ll come find you when it’s time, so make sure you’re listening for your phone in case I can’t spot you.”

Izuku smiles back. “Yes, Sensei.”

As she leaves there’s a familiar, echoing call of his name from above. He turns to find Reo at the top of the stairs followed closely by his mother. Izuku waves up at them as they jog down the steps. Reo engulfs him in a hug as soon as he’s close enough.

He and Misaki exchange a brief greeting before she and Inko break away to find a place to sit.

“You excited?” Reo asks, eyes bright as they take a seat a few rows behind their mothers.

“I don’t know if excited is the right word for it. I was originally. I thought I’d be able to learn a lot,” Izuku explains with a nervous laugh. “But, there’s a lot more safety procedures than I expected with a whole list of things that can get you disqualified. The whole reason I’ve avoided these for so long is because I didn’t see any appeal in pointlessly hurting people, so I feel like I’m more anxious that I won’t learn anything and that this’ll have been for nothing.”

Reo nods, leaning back in his seat. “That’s valid. I’d be worried as well, but I think you’ll be surprised. By the way,” he adds, bumping shoulders with Izuku. “My mom said she didn’t know if my uncle will actually show up or not, but let it be known that I did give him a ticket.”

Izuku laughs, swaying with the push. “That’s fine. I’m sure it felt pretty out of the blue for him.”

Reo rolls his eyes. “You guys have met quite a few times so it’s not like it’s unusual for you to invite him. Also, he told me to congratulate you for your win at the sports festival. I guess if he misses this I’ll have to tell him to congratulate you on your win today as well.” His friend’s smile stretches into a grin.

Izuku bats at him playfully. “The matches for my age group haven’t even started yet.”

In his pocket his phone buzzes. Izuku’s heart surges into his throat, thinking it’s Chee Sensei calling to tell him it’s already time despite the fact that she’s barely been gone five minutes. Instead, he finds a text message. “Shinsou’s almost here,” he says, smile in his voice.

Reo leans over, peeking at his screen. “Sounds like he’s just a few blocks away.”

Izuku nods excitedly as they go back to watching what seems to be the final match for the age category just beneath him. He’s watched a countless number of quirkless fights play out while training, but this is his first time seeing one outside of the dojo. It’s strange to hear so many people cheering on such an unostentatious fight.

Izuku is far more accustomed to fighting dirty than anything he sees happening in the rings below. He had to be if he wanted to survive in Musutafu’s back alleys. Holding back against villains trying to kill or

incapacitate was not a luxury he had. The sports festival had placed him in a similar scenario.

This tournament is different. There were strict rules in place to prevent unnecessary injuries. Everyone has high hopes for him, but it worries him just how easy it could be for him to be penalized or disqualified if he isn't careful.

Chee Sensei had been thorough in running him through all the procedures, had given him a list and a long talk about every banned move he could've possibly thought to pull. She'd done her best to beat the street fighting out of his limbs. Even so, he's worried.

The two of them talk idly for a few minutes before a winner is determined for the fight below. It's not long after that that finally Shinsou arrives.

"Nice to see the place hasn't burned down yet." He grins, slipping past them and taking a seat on the other side of Reo.

Midoriya laughs, trying and failing to act out a shushing motion. "We didn't tell our moms about that happening."

"About what happening?"

Izuku's head whips around, panic etched into his face at the sight of Chee Sensei looming on the steps beside him. She looks cross, but in an amused sense that puts him at ease.

"Nothing," he replies with a grin.

The woman gently jerks her head towards the side, ignoring the answer. "It's time."

He nods, apologizing to Shinsou for leaving so soon and jogging a little way down the steps to give his mom a quick hug before following Chee Sensei back up. He waves goodbye to his friends as he goes, followed by the sound of their well-wishes as he leaves.

The dressing room isn't what he expected. It's a long, but narrow room filled to the brim with contestants and their trainers preparing for their own fights. Scattered between them are roaming officials, checking gear and answering questions.

They find an empty spot nearby to set up shop and Chee Sensei sets the duffel bag down, rummaging through it for supplies. She helps pull his hair back into a small ponytail first. Assumably ignoring the stiffness in Izuku's shoulders, her hands occasionally brushing against the scar on his neck as she ties his hair off. He hadn't realized it'd even gotten long enough to do so. She motions for him to straddle one of the fold-out chairs nearby once she's done and takes the seat directly across from him.

One of the officials approaches from behind them then. Izuku can only assume that they're familiar with one another as Ji-Woo shares a brief nod with him. The man smiles down at him in greeting but remains quiet. "I told you the other day," Ji-Woo says, glancing towards Izuku, "but they'll be watching me wrap your hands for safety purposes." She glances at the man again, waiting for his nod of approval before she begins.

She starts an inch and a half down his wrist, hands steady as she wraps the gauze, working her towards his knuckles and around the base of his thumb as she goes. "Make a fist." She tugs at the padding a bit, making sure it covers his knuckles before continuing. She's methodical in her work, more so than he's ever seen from her at the dojo.

"Open your hand."

She picks up the tape, flashing it towards the official overseeing them. He gives a silent nod of approval and she begins wrapping it around his wrist and threading it between his fingers like tendons. She gives a few occasional commands to open or close his fist as she works. Other than this the three of them remain quiet.

To their left there's a ring of people, all gathered around a referee, listening to what she says. "I don't care who wins, I care about your safety. I have to know that you're okay at all times. If I determine that you're hurt I'll call an end to the match. If you get knocked down I'm gonna need you to *prove* to me that you're able to continue fighting. I'll ask you two questions if that happens: are you okay and are you ready to continue. You'll have to answer yes to both questions. If you cannot answer these questions, or take too long to answer these questions I'll end the match right there. If you can answer them I'm gonna ask you to walk towards me. I'll make sure you're not stumblin' around like you're drunk and if you can do these three things then the match continues. Does everybody understand?"

Izuku tunes out the rest of what the referee's saying as Ji-Woo switches to working on his other hand.

"Remember," she says firmly, "The age brackets all have different match types. Any of the ones you watched today are different from what yours will be. Your fights are single rounds, four minutes each. After each round they'll have you checked over by a doctor."

Izuku nods.

"Unless a timeout is called I probably won't get to speak to you while you're in the ring, but I trust you to know what to do." She pauses, gently squeezing his hand. "You're one of my best students, Midoriya. Even so, this is your first tournament. It's gonna be a lot different than anything you've experienced before. Don't be too hard on yourself if things don't go as expected."

"Hai."

The shirt he changes into is skin-tight, decorated by splashes of red, scale-like patterns. It's just the slightest bit uncomfortable, it does, however, hide a majority of his scars.

"I figured you'd want a rash guard," Chee Sensei states, nodding towards his shirt. "Regulations for them have been in and out in the last ten years, but they're not mandatory at the moment if you'd rather ditch it."

Izuku shakes his head, thankful she'd thought to bring one for him. She tosses him a pair of shiny vermilion gloves and he grimaces. "Does everything have to be red?" he asks.

The woman shrugs.

She pulls out a few more things, handing-off a set of shin guards that he slips into. He flexes his feet in them, accustoming himself to the feel. He'd had shin guards as a vigilante of course, but these extend towards his toes and wrap beneath the arch of his foot. He's only ever worn these a few times at the dojo when he was younger.

"Feels like a child's game," he murmurs to himself.

Chee Sensei looks up at him with a raised brow. "You're only fifteen, Midoriya. It *is* a child's game," The woman huffs. "Needless to say,

even if it feels like a child's game to you, make sure you don't underestimate your opponents."

"Of course."

It's not long after this that they're pulled to the side by a different referee. Izuku takes a seat next to what he assumes will be his first opponent.

Together, the three of them go over the rules of the match, it's all things he's heard before from Chee Sensei, but he makes sure to pay close attention to what's being said. The referee speaks clearly, explaining everything in detail and leaving no room for confusion. "There should be no elbow strikes, no knee strikes, no grounded strikes, and *absolutely*," he stresses, "no punches or kicks aimed at the head. I don't think I need to remind either of you that quirk usage is strictly prohibited, but just in case, we do have professionals stationed ringside that are able to determine if a quirk is being used." While in the cage, the referee's word is law. Every possible instruction they could call out during the match is gone over, what they mean and what they're expected to do if one is called. "If your mouthpiece or your opponent's mouthpiece comes out for any reason: don't stop fighting. I'll wait for a lull, once I see one I'll call for you to stop. What that means is to stop whatever you're doing and break away from each other. Protect yourself on the way out, protect yourself at all times. Now," he say, turning towards Izuku's opponent, "do you have any questions, concerns, or issues?"

"No."

He turns back to Izuku. "Do *you* have any questions, concerns, or issues?"

Izuku shakes his head. "No."

The referee gives a nod. "Perfect. Best of luck to the both of you."

There are more people in the stands than there were before, just like he'd been told. They're not loud like the sports festival had been, but the hum of hundreds of conversations leaves a low, clamorous ringing in his ears as they enter the ground floor of the arena.

There's only one cage set up now that's been fully centered on the court. He figures that, with the start of the older contestants, they've slowed down the pacing of the matches, giving the growing audience more to look forward to.

"Anything the referee says, you do," Ji-Woo states as they get closer to the cage. She gives him a brief, one-armed side hug before pushing him towards the ring. "I believe in you."

At the center of the octagon, the announcer begins speaking. "Youth B! Contested at the 67kg weight limit! Please welcome your first fighter into the cage! In the red corner, it's Midoriya Izuku!"

As soon as he's ringside, he's patted down, gloves checked and mouth guard looked over before he slips it between his teeth and he's allowed to enter. Once inside everything feels so foreign to him. The referee points him towards his side of the ring as his opponent is checked over outside.

"And is his opponent! Making their way into the cage! In the blue corner, it's Shiraishi Ren!"

His opponent hops from one foot to the other as he enters, shaking his limbs out in preparation for their fight. This isn't his opponent's first tournament, this much is obvious from the overconfidence he can feel radiating off the boy.

Midoriya Izuku is a name new to this community. His opponent doesn't expect him to win this fight.

The referee steps into the center of the ring, motioning them over. "You received your instructions in the dressing room. I wanna caution you to keep this fight clean at all times, protect yourself at all times, and what I say you must obey." There's a brief pause as he looks between the two. "Touch gloves."

The two of them bump fists with one another and step back. The referee points at both of them from their corners, asking if they're ready. As soon as he receives confirmation, he claps his hands, backing away as the match begins.

His opponent is the first to make a move, aiming a punch at Izuku's side that he easily slips around, countering with a punch of his own that strikes center mass.

Shiraishi stumbles back a step, lowering his stance and charging at

Izuku. He's able to wrap his arms around Izuku's torso in one smooth, near tackle move and Izuku has to hold himself back from driving an elbow into his exposed back.

Piper wasn't a grappler, he rarely got this close to his opponents let alone dragged them to the ground. He focused on using brute force to put a quick end to fights. But, Izuku had watched the matches beforehand and ninety percent of them had ended on the mat, opponents' limbs tangled with one another in a writhing mass until someone tapped out or time was called.

He wasn't comfortable on the floor like his opponent was. Izuku, however, wouldn't let this stop him. Ji-woo had taught him everything he needed to know after all.

Midoriya keeps himself upright, planning his feet before wrapping his own arms around Shiraishi's torso from above. He takes a slow knee, lowering his opponent to the ground and securing the high position. He flips the other boy onto his side with a hard thud against the mat. It takes only a few more seconds to get himself into a position that allows him to wrap his legs around Shiraishi's struggling form and bring him into an armbar. The boy's face twists with pain as he taps.

"Stop!"

And with that, Izuku's first-ever match is over. He untangles himself from his opponent and the referee brings them both back to the center, first checking that Shiraishi's not injured before he takes hold of both of their wrists.

"And your winner!" the announcer calls, "Representing the red corner, it's Midoriya Izuku!"

Izuku's arm goes up and the crowd roars around them. The noise hums through him like the wordless language of stars. It's bright and warm and all too familiar to the sensation of saving someone. His eyes find Ji-Woo through the fence of the ring as she clings to the side of it, an excited smile that he's never seen before lighting up her face.

His bright laugh is drowned out by the cheering of the crowd.

Just like Ji-Woo had warned before, every fight is punctuated by a visit to one of the two on-sight physicians equipped, both of which are equipt with minor restoration quirks. His meetings with them are

always rather short.

Because of his short visits, it's easy to see most of the earlier matches. It is, however, somewhat distressing to watch the way his opponents fight. Izuku understands that it's a side effect of the tournament's rules, but it's obvious within the first five seconds of every match that his opponents' brains are wired very differently compared to his. It's hard to watch them fight with so many openings, it's even harder to be the one fighting against them, even if it makes it easier to win. Every match following his first, he has to repress his instinct. Every move he makes in the cage has to be the outcome of a conscious thought. If he loses sight of his situation for even a moment he's afraid he'll slip up and hurt someone.

He's careful though. He does his best to end the next three matches quickly, flying through them with the power and efficiency of someone with real-world experience. Only one of his opponents lasts the full four minutes, forcing them to default to the judges' decision to determine the winner of what's already his semi-final match.

He beats his opponent 10 to 8.

There's a short break before the final match of his division to allow the contestants time to prepare themselves for the fight. He gets a short chance to meet with everyone one last time before he's pulled back into the dressing room to allow him time to focus.

"Ishioka is your next opponent," Ji-Woo informs him as they wait, "She works similarly to you in the way that she likes to finish her fights quickly. However, she'll probably try to get you on the ground as fast as possible. Just like your first match, she'll want to pull you into an arm or legbar early on. Don't let her. Stay up as long as you can and if you go down, try to make it on *your terms*," she says, poking his chest in unison with the last two words.

The next time he hears the girl's name, she's being introduced by the announcer. "Making her way into the octagon! In the blue corner, Ishioka Kaede!"

Ishioka grins as she enters the cage, sharp canines flashing in the overhead lights as she slips her mouth guard in. She has a bright energy about her, bouncing from foot to foot, excited for a good fight.

Her ears, like her teeth, are pointed. And her hair is short, and brown, and pulled back into a messy ponytail that's just a bit longer than his own. There's fire in her steely gray eyes and it, in turn, lights a fire in his own.

At the referee's signal, they both step towards him. "You received your instructions in the dressing room. Keep this fight clean at all times, protect yourself at all times, and what I say you must obey." There's a brief pause as he looks between the two of them. "Understood?"

There's a smile on Ishioka's face that Izuku mirrors as they both nod.

They touch gloves when instructed and step back into their respective corners. The referee catches both of their gazes, making eye contact as he confirms if they're ready to go.

Again, they both nod. The referee claps his hands and the match begins.

Midoriya's the first to make a move, rushing out with a flurry of punches towards her abdomen. She's able to block some of the blows, but a majority of them slip through her guard as he does what he can to push her towards the fence. She's not so weak to let him have his way so easily, however. She slips beneath one of his punches, wrapping an arm around the back of his neck in an attempt to get control of his head as they're pushed against the fence.

He can tell from the second she grabs hold of him that she's trying to twist him to the ground, legs kicking out at the back of his to try and trip him up or buckle his knees. He keeps Ji-Woo's advice in his head.

"If you go down, try to make it on your terms."

He slips an arm around her back, and just like Ishioka's trying to do to him, Izuku wraps his foot around the back of her leg, and pulls her down. He twists his body as they fall, making sure he lands on top. They hit the ground with a loud slap of skin against mat and Ishioka uses the change of positions to wrap her legs around his torso. She clings to him with a grin on her face, dragging him closer towards the mat. Despite being the one pinned to the floor, she uses her position to her advantage and works at grappling his arm away from him. He grits his teeth, doing what he can to make sure she isn't able to pull it away and into an armbar.

Everything around them is so loud, both the crowd and his own heartbeat. It feels like the referee is always talking. Calling his name

or his opponent's, giving instructions what feels like every other second. It's enough to distract him, and at some point, Izuku ends up tuning him out altogether.

Midoriya jerks his arm out of her grasp by grace of his minor strength advantage alone. He repositions it, wrapping the arm around the back of her neck and refusing to give the girl a chance to take control of it.

An armbar could spell out the end of their match.

He brings his other arm up, using it as a leverage point to help force her head to crane painfully towards her own chest, desperate for a submission.

He's vaguely aware of someone calling out, "Come on, Ishioka!"

Izuku's hold on her tightens, determined to make her tap.

"Stop!"

The command doesn't register in his head.

"Midoriya, stop!" A hand lands on his back and he flinches back into his surroundings. "Let her go!"

He does. Izuku drags himself off the girl as they stand and the ref sends them to their respective corners. The referee checks on Ishioka first, making sure she's alright before turning towards him.

"You have to listen for me! That's an illegal move, you were putting pressure on her neck!" The referee calls over the crowd, tapping at the nape of their neck to make sure he understands.

Izuku nods, breathing heavily as the man signals something to the judges before the match continues.

"Keep your head on straight, Midoriya!" Ji-Woo calls from behind him.

He needs to get a hold of himself. He should've known better.

He stays up on his feet longer this time, keeping his distance with well-placed kicks and the occasional punch. But, it's not long before she's gotten him back on the mat. She keeps control of the entanglement, but he doesn't give her a chance to pull him into a position where he's forced to tap out.

This is the second match of his that lasts until the final bell.

The referee breaks them up, and Izuku pushes himself up on tired feet. None of his fights had been as labor-intensive as this. His eyes once again find Ji-Woo hovering just outside the cage.

The referee drags them both back towards the center of the cage, gently taking hold of their wrists as scoring is handed over to the judges. They don't have to wait long before a decision is made.

Above them, the announcer's voice booms out over the loudspeakers. "And your winner! By technical decision! Representing the blue corner, Ishioka Kaede!" The hand wrapped around his wrist does not go up.

He breathes out a sigh as the arena erupts into cheers.

"And with that, the first day of the tournament comes to a close! Tomorrow! We'll be back at it with the Youth A division! Make sure you're here to see it!"

"It was 10 to 9," Ji-Woo informs him once he's out of the ring. "The foul you made deducted points from your score."

"I figured as much," Izuku replies, "She was good, fought just like you said she would as well. She probably would've had me tapping if I hadn't fouled."

She's in the middle leading him off the court when he hears a familiar voice calling out to him. He turns to find Reo and company pushing through the crowded court floor, all of them brandishing their family passes like weapons. Ji-Woo takes a single step back as Reo barrels into Izuku and wraps him in a bone-shaking hug. Izuku nearly loses his balance, threatening to topple them. "That was amazing!" Reo shouts over the crowd.

Izuku laughs against his chest as Reo pulls away, amber eyes shining. "It wasn't all that great," he responds.

Inko's the next to reach him and Reo slips out of the way to make room for her. She hugs him just as tightly. "I didn't understand much, but you certainly had me at the edge of my seat!"

Misaki and Shinsou follow behind them more quietly, both of them

brandishing a smile and words of congratulations.

“You realize I didn’t win, right?” he chuckles.

“You still beat out four other competitors to get where you did,” Ji-Woo states firmly from behind. “I told you not to be hard on yourself, Midoriya. This is your first tournament.”

Inko releases him then, and Ji-Woo motions for them to follow her back to the prep rooms for more privacy.

Naomasa’s spent the last thirty minutes hovering outside the tournament hall, leaned against the building and longing for a cigarette that he really doesn’t want. “I’m already late,” he murmurs, slipping his phone out of his pocket to check the time. He sighs, almost reluctantly deciding it’s time to make his way inside.

He sticks to the back of the arena seating once he’s in, purposefully choosing not to seek out his sister or nephew. He really doesn’t know how long he’ll stay for and doesn’t want to bother them if he decides it’s too much. He does, however, end up staying until the end of the tournament, watching as Midoriya progresses through the matches until finally taking second place in the finals. Being here isn’t as bad as he thought it might be, the fights are all very different than what he expected them to be. But, it’s still hard watching so many kids fighting against each other.

In another life, he figures Piper could’ve been amongst them.

Naomasa makes his exit soon after the end of the final fight, following the mass exodus of the crowd. He watches from the corner of his eye as Reo and Midoriya collide on the court in a bone-shaking hug before the crowd swallows his view of the arena floor.

He’ll have to congratulate him later.

The prep room Izuku was assigned has slowly been clearing out as the night dragged on until only Izuku remained.

Reo bends over, resting his chin on Izuku’s shoulder and watching as Ji-Woo cuts him out of his hand wraps. “I’ve got a present for you once you’re done.” Izuku looks at him from the corner of his eye as

the boy tilts his head towards the backpack he'd come in with. There's a sly smile on his lips as he pulls back, slipping away to talk with Shinsou about a new youtuber he'd found.

Inko comes over only a few moments later, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder. "I've got an early shift tomorrow, do you think you'll be much longer, sweetie?"

He smiles up at her. "I'll probably hang out here a bit more, you can go ahead and go without me. I won't be too far behind you. I'll be back ten-thirty at the latest."

She sweeps aside a few of his curls, pressing a tired kiss to his temple. "Let me know if you're gonna be late."

"Love you, mom."

"Love you too. Be safe."

Reo catches Izuku coming out of the bathroom after he's changed back into his usual clothes. He pulls him down an empty hall, slipping the backpack from his shoulder and rummaging through it. From it, he pulls out a slightly crushed gift bag that he shoves towards him. "Here."

Izuku looks down at it in confusion. "What?"

"I told you I had something for you. I was going to give it to you if you won. But I think second place counts as well," Reo teases.

Izuku takes it from him carefully, peeking inside. At the bottom of the bag is a small steel cylinder about the length of his forearm. Reo looks at him with a growing smile.

"An escrima stick?" he asks.

"Take it out, take it out," Reo encourages, holding the bag for him as Izuku grabs the item. It's heavier than he expects it to be, but it's a nice weight. "Okay, now put your hands in the middle and twist!"

He does as instructed, nearly dropping it as the cylinder quickly extends out on each side, quadrupling in length to form a full-sized bo staff. Izuku gawks down at the weapon, looking up at Reo in surprise.

Reo takes a deep breath, centering himself before he speaks again."I'm

supporting you," he says solemnly, placing a hand over Izuku's and squeezing gently. "Even when there's no one else to do it, I will believe in you, Izuku. You *will* become a hero."

Izuku feels something soft and bright swell inside his chest. It's a somewhat foreign feeling, but certainly not an unwelcome one. He bites into his lower lip, bowing his head to hide the watery look in his eyes. "Thank you," he croaks.

Naomasa's walk home is quiet. It's also, unfortunately, short-lived. He's barely made it a few blocks from the flood of people leaving the tournament hall when he feels a katana pierce through his shoulder from behind.

He lets out a grunt of pain, stumbling forward from the impact.

"Detective Tsukauchi."

The blade is jerked roughly out of him, an involuntary cry escaping him as he covers the wound with his hand. He doesn't even get a chance to turn towards his attacker before he feels all the muscles in his body give out and he collapses to the pavement. Naomasa's head cracks against the sidewalk. Stars dance at the corner of his eyes. He blinks sluggishly, trying to clear them away.

"I don't usually go after police. You'll be my first exception."

He feels a hand wrap around his ankle before he's dragged down the nearest alley.

He wonders listlessly if this is how Piper died.

There's a shout from the other end of the alley, but he can't turn his head to see who it is. He blinks again as black curls at the corner of his eyes. Everything feels fuzzy. He can barely even feel his wound anymore. He blinks again. His breathing softens. His vision tunnels. The voices sound distant and far away.

He stares blankly at the wall across from him.

He blinks, his eyes do not open again.

Chapter End Notes

> It's been four weeks since I posted, but this chapter was seven thousand words and I ran out of steam and just opened the

document to stare at it for a good two weeks without doing anything. Even my long-awaited excitement for this arc could not break through that wall, but I did finish it, eventually. It's well past three now and I've been working on this chapter all day, so I'm off to bed. Hope you all enjoyed the chapter and are looking forward to what fate awaits our dear detective :)
To Taz, I apologize for what I've done
To Avery, I'm sorry I posted while you were asleep again 😔😔 i love you very much please forgive me

Until next time!

Wolf-Rayet

Chapter Summary

> After taking second in the tournament, Reo gifts Izuku his first staff since Piper's death and Stain prepares to leave his mark on Musutafu via one very specific off-duty detective.

Chapter Notes

> TW :// blood , violence , death

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart!!

sorrel

vsversus

clay

desertcryptid

taztaztaz-blog x

fretful-ferret x

ability2

They don’t stay too much longer and soon enough the group begins to head their separate ways. Chee Sensei gives him one last congratulatory pat on the back and Reo’s mother, surprisingly enough, pulls him into a short hug. There’s a bright smile on her face.

“It’s a shame my brother couldn’t make it, you did amazing out there. Thank you for inviting us.”

Izuku flushes a bright pink as she pulls away. “Thanks,” he murmurs, scratching bashfully at the back of his neck. “I’m glad you guys could make it.” He locks eyes with Reo and feels himself begin to mirror the smile on his face.

Shinsou leans against Reo’s shoulder, whispering something in his ear before slipping over to Izuku’s side.

“We’ll be going then,” Misaki says. The woman shoos him in the direction of the train. Not including Shinsou and the Midoriyas, the others had all come by car.

Izuku laughs as he and Shinsou break away from the others, waving goodbye.

“Take care of that gift!” Reo calls from behind, walking backward as he does so and nearly stumbling into his mother.

Izuku does the same, feeling for the staff inside his hoodie pocket. “I’ll try not to lose it!”

“You better not!”

They make promises to see each other at school, but he and Shinsou have barely been walking alone a full minute when Reo catches up with them again. They both turn to find him running towards them, panting and out of breath. There’s a stupid grin on his face. “I convinced her to let me take the train with you guys.”

“I can’t believe you’re already out of breath,” Izuku laughs. Reo slings an arm around his shoulders, pulling him into a headlock and playfully tussling his hair still damp with sweat.

It’s not long before the three of them have completely abandoned what remained of the tournament crowd, opting for a station where they could hopefully avoid the hoard. The usually quiet streets are kept alive by their casual bickering. Izuku’s quieter than the other two, more tired than he’d ever care to admit to them, but it shows itself in his decreasing amount of idle chatter. This creeping exhaustion is also the reason he’s the first to notice. It’s barely audible, nothing more than a whisper on the wind, fading in and out of existence.

“–member this name…”

Izuku pauses as the other two continue walking. It’s distant, probably just another street away.

“–m Ingenium! The hero w…”

Reo stops as well, looking back at him. “Izuku?” He’s understandably confused.

Izuku strains his ears, staring into the alley he’s stopped in front of.

“–ake you down!”

He takes a step into the alley, feet dragging him closer to the noise. The shadows are spider-like, crawling up the sides of the buildings.

“Midoriya?” It’s Shinsou’s voice this time.

Izuku comes out the other side on another deserted street. He looks carefully each way. A hand settles on his shoulder and he looks back to see the other two have caught up with him again.

“Talk to me, Izuku,” Reo says. His eyes are a mix of confusion and a careful caution.

“There’s someone,” he murmurs.

“Hero Killer!” It’s an eerily familiar voice to two of them, loud enough to be heard by the entire group.

Izuku’s head whips to the left and his body wastes no time carrying him towards the source. “Call the police!” Izuku shouts behind him, reaching for the staff in his pocket on instinct rather than conscious thought.

“–genium’s brother? He helped spread the word of my duty. But you’re…” There’s a cry of pain. “–so weak.” There’s another cry, louder this time.

His friends are hot on his trail as he dashes across the street, skidding to a stop at the mouth of a second alley.

“Hey!” Shinsou’s shout, aimed at the villain, is a desperate one.

Stain looks up at their group carefully, poised dangerously over the body of someone donning armor. He yanks a katana out of their shoulder with a morbid squelch and brings the blade to his mouth. He cleans it with a swipe of his tongue in a way that turns Izuku's stomach in the same breath that it revives something inside of him he’d been trying to smother.

Izuku twists the staff in his hands, spinning it in one smooth motion as it extends out to its full size.

It’s not until Izuku’s already swung his staff that Stain finally responds to Shinsou’s call. “More kids?” His eyes glaze over a split second before the end of Izuku’s staff slams harshly into his cheekbone.

“Midoriya!”

It sends the villain stumbling back a few steps. It’s not much, but it’s enough to get him off of Iida. He shakes his head a bit, shaking off the effects of Shinsou’s quirk like one would cobwebs.

“Shit, shit, shit, I don’t know. Can’t you just ping our location?” Reo curses, stationed at the mouth of the alley, a phone pressed to his ear.

It takes only a glance to confirm Iida’s identity. Izuku takes a defensive stance in front of the boy. His glare is sharp as his eyes lock in on the villain. “Iida, can you stand?”

At first, there’s only a grunt in response, but it’s followed closely with a breathy, “No. He cut me, that’s likely his quirk.”

“Shinsou,” Izuku barks, “Get him out of the way.”

“But–”

Izuku cuts him off. “I don’t want to trip over him.”

“This isn’t your fight,” Iida grits out as Shinsou rushes over, doing his best to hoist the boy up.

Stain is only watching them at the moment, waiting to see what they’ll do. “You’ve become a slave to your anger,” he states instead, addressing Iida, “to the point where you’re no longer driven by anything besides your own self-interest.”

“My brother was a great hero!” Iida shouts back, “You took that from him, and for what!” He hangs limply from Shinsou’s arms as he’s dragged away. There are tears on his cheeks. “I’ll kill you for what you did to him!”

Reo’s voice rises again, “What do you mean you’re having trouble! I’m telling you the hero ki–”

A blade flies past Izuku’s cheek, too fast to so much as register. It slams into the phone in Reo’s hand with scary accuracy. The older teen yelps in fear, dropping it and leaping away in fright.

Izuku whips around without thinking, the boy’s name already on his lips, “Reo!”

“Tsukauchi!”

There's a scratch on Reo's cheek and a shallow cut dripping blood on the side of his hand. On the ground, the phone he'd been using is absolutely destroyed, one of Stain's serrated blades stabbing through the middle. Its screen flickers once, twice, three times, before fading to black.

Midoriya waits with bated breath for something to happen. Nothing does.

"I'm not done," Stain states ominously.

Izuku slowly turns back towards the villain.

"Those driven by self-interest," Stain continues, "are not heroes." He turns to Midoriya then. "My duty is to kill these two." His blade swings downwards, pointing back at a second body that they'd failed to notice in the dark.

Izuku freezes, recognition dawning like a sunless sunrise. His voice is nothing more than a quiet croak, " *Detective* ."

Reo's head snaps towards Izuku at the word, following his line of sight. He turns silent, distress wrapping a cruel hand around his throat, smothering any attempt at speech.

Sprawled behind the villain is the body of Detective Tsukauchi Naomasa. Blood stains his white shirt and pools on the ground around his shoulder. He's unmoving. His eyes are closed, and his face is blank, and in the darkness, it's hard to tell if the gentle rise and fall of his chest is an illusion or not.

"If we fight now, it's only natural that the weaker of us will be culled." Stain's eyes drift to the others behind Izuku, to Shinsou, to Reo. The look in his eyes is enough to strike fear into the hearts of those who have never experienced killing intent.

Determination settles in Izuku's eyes.

"Get out of here, Midoriya, Shinsou!" Iida shouts. "It's none of your business what happens here! You're not heroes! We're not even friends!"

Izuku's reluctant to admit that the words sting. "That's no excuse to abandon someone in need."

"You'll die here!"

“So will you!” Izuku spits viciously. “Are you prepared to die like this?!” He keeps his eyes trained on Stain. “I can guess why you’re here! Are you prepared to die for revenge?!”

“Yes!” Iida barks determinedly.

Something hot and fiery awakens inside Izuku’s throat. “Then you’re even stupider than I was,” he hisses, ”Don’t tell me you’re planning to have your brother attend your funeral.”

“This isn’t your battle, Midoriya!” Iida shouts back instead.

“You’re right.” Izuku shifts his stance, preparing to take the offensive. “But, If I listened to that kind of logic there’d be a lot more families mourning in Musutafu. Reo,” he calls, “I’m sorry.”

Reo lets out a mirthless half-laugh. “I think we can consider this an exception to your promise.”

Izuku is the first to attack. “Glad we’re on the same page.”

Reo has patched more wounds than he can remember on account of Izuku’s nighttime heroism. Even so, his hands shake as he goes to help Shinsou lay Iida on the ground. He recognizes him from the sports festival, one of Izuku’s teammates from the second round, the brother of Stain’s most recent victim. Reo slips out of his button-up, using it to staunch the bleeding. He doesn’t have any supplies and his quirk’s sorting system is in shambles from nerves.

“Shinsou,” Reo chokes out, trying to remember what he can, “Izuku’s probably going to do whatever it takes to push that guy back. As soon as you see a safe chance to get that other man out of there, *do it* .”

Shinsou’s eyes flicker towards where Midoriya’s fighting, then towards the body still laying just behind Stain’s feet. He gives a determined nod, pushing himself up. He takes a deep breath, gathering all of the fear inside his lungs. “Hey, Voldemort!”

It’s a dance of sorts, a constant clash of steel that gives flight to brilliant sparks of light every time their weapons clash. In this bloody street brawl, there were no rules like there are in the ring and Izuku uses it to his advantage. Every dirty trick he’s ever learned as a

vigilante comes back to him like second nature. He swings at Stain's head, at his elbows, at his knees. He spies a plastic milk crate tucked beside a dumpster and uses one end of his staff to pick it up and fling it at the villain's face with a speed rivaling one of the man's blades. He does his best to drive Stain back, to get him away from where Naomasa's still bleeding out. He doesn't know how bad the detective's wounds are, but he can tell that time isn't on their side. Every few seconds he can hear Shinsou shouting something from behind him, trying and failing to get Stain's attention long enough to garner any sort of verbal response from the villain.

Izuku won't be able to beat him alone. He's not stupid enough to think otherwise. He doesn't even know if he'll be able to hold Stain off long enough for help to arrive. Shinsou was their only hope of capturing Stain without reinforcements. Midoriya feels a breath away from death at all times, every move he makes must be calculated and yet if he thinks too much he'll be overwhelmed.

One of Stain's spiked boots slip through his guard, barreling into Izuku's ribs. His eyes pinch closed in pain. But before Stain can pull away, Izuku wraps his arm around his ankle, firmly locking it in place. "Why is it always the right," Izuku coughs. The spikes dig deeper into his ribs, hot blood trickling down his side. He gives the villain no time to react as raises his other arm, slamming his elbow harshly into the side of his knee.

It's not enough to break it, but the man still grunts in pain. He swings his katana in retaliation, forcing Izuku to release his hold. He dodges the blade by an angel's breath, the force of it ruffling his hair as he falls backwards. Izuku rolls to the side, Stain's boot slamming into the concrete in pursuit of his shadow.

Iida had suggested that being cut by the man's blade was enough to cause whatever paralysis he'd fallen into. But, Stain had drawn blood from both Reo and Iida, and now, Izuku as well. Iida, however, was the only one of them that couldn't move.

Izuku throws himself back on his feet, once again falling into a fighting stance. He glances down at Stain's boots as the fight lulls for a moment. He looks back up. A smirk blooming on his face despite the fear in his throat. "Nice shoes. Seems like we've got similar taste. The spikes are pretty nice right?"

Stain's eyes narrow without a response.

It's possible that Stain could paralyze only one target at a time. But, Izuku remembers seeing it as soon as they'd stepped foot in the alley: the way Stain had cleaned the blood off his blade.

The fight resumes. Izuku swings his staff, throwing all his weight into the strike. The villain jumps back, avoiding the attack.

There's another desperate taunt from Shinsou.

"I thought you were dead."

Izuku misses a beat, faltering at Stain's words, but continues fighting. "And I thought you were supposed to be in Hosu," the boy grunts in response, cursing when the katana passes inches from his arm.

The villain quiets.

Izuku gets in close, sparing a glance to the side. In his peripheral vision, he spots one of Naomasa's hands. *Just a little further.*

"I heard why you're here," Midoriya growls. He clenches his fists around his staff, aiming a desperate strike at the knee he'd injured earlier. "If you want to respect Piper's wishes, then I'd try killing less people," he spits.

Stain blocks the attack, eyes narrowing. "I'm not here to avenge *Piper* ," he corrects, "I'm here to cull the rotten heroes of Musutafu."

"That man isn't even a hero," Izuku snarls, "He's a police officer."

"And yet he failed his job all the same. He abandoned his post."

"He's *grieving* ," Izuku snaps, voice cracking. He clenches his jaw, refocusing on the fight though he feels all the more aware of Reo's presence behind him.

"Grief is nothing more than socially accepted greed and self-pity," Stain states between blows. "It's an excuse. The boy behind you wields his grief like a katana for the sake of revenge: defending his egocentrism by labeling it heroism."

Izuku tunes out the words and stabs forward with his staff, pushing the villain back. It's not much but it's all Izuku needs. "Shinsou, now!"

Shinsou hesitates for only a moment before rushing forward. There's fear in his eyes and fire in his chest as he darts towards the detective.

He shoves his hands under the man's shoulders, wrapping them under his arms. Under better circumstances, Shinsou would've liked to avoid grabbing anywhere near the man's obvious injury, if only so he didn't have to know what fresh blood feels like beneath his palm, but there's no time for such formalities.

Izuku steps fully between Stain and Naomasa. He takes a defensive stance, fully prepared to do whatever he can to protect both Shinsou and the unconscious detective.

"Despite what you did, that call still went through," Izuku grunts, pushing back a swing of his blade, "People will be looking for us."

Izuku sees it happening before he's able to react: Stain's free hand wrapping around the second knife at his hip. He draws it, arching wide while Izuku's still in close.

"I'll have to finish this quickly then."

The serrated edge of the knife leaves a cut along the side of his abdomen. It's not deep, but it's enough to make him falter. Stain brings his katana back up while he's still recovering, slamming the blunt edge of it into Izuku's cheek before he can get his staff up to block it. The blow sends him reeling.

Stain uses the opening the slip around him. Izuku reaches out to stop him, hand outstretched to grab at something, anything, when Stain brings his bloodied blade up to his lips. Midoriya feels his muscles tense and freeze, legs stopping in their tracks. He lets out a word of warning, "Shinsou!"

The teen's head snaps up at his name, still only two-thirds of the way to Reo. Stain spares a glance at him, eyes flickering down towards the detective. He does not stop, continuing past them: straight towards Reo and Iida.

"Stop!"

Shinsou's eyes widen, rubberbanding between where Midoriya stands frozen and where Reo hovers protectively over Iida.

"Every decision you've made in your life has led you to this point. It is no one's fault but your own for what happens here."

Izuku's voice feels raw. "Don't touch them!"

Reo leaps up, covering Iida's body with his own in a desperate attempt to protect the boy. Stain aims a hellish kick at Reo's side, throwing him off. A pained shout escapes him as he curls into a ball where he lands.

Midoriya can do nothing but watch, tears of desperation building. "Reo!"

"A heroic attempt."

Shinsou stands frozen where he is, shaking as he tightens his grip on Naomasa. "Iida get up," he chokes out. It's barely loud enough to be heard, but the words carry with it the entire weight of Hitoshi's quirk. "Get out of here!"

"I'm not leaving till he's dead!" Tenya snarls, face twisted with righteous fury unbefitting of a fifteen-year-old.

But, that response is all it takes for Iida's red eyes to glaze over. "Iida! Get! Up!" A headache explodes at Shinsou's temples, but Iida's arms move shakily beneath him, trembling as he pushes himself up. His face is blank, emotionless.

Stain watches it happen with mild interest. He, however, doesn't give the boy a chance to get his knees back under him. Stain slams his blade down.

Midoriya Izuku is only fifteen when he's forced to watch as Iida Tenya is impaled on the blade of the villain he failed to defeat. His frozen, outstretched hand reaches no one.

Iida's arms give out and he collapses back to the ground, the murky white of Shinsou quirk evaporating. Iida's eyes widen in slow motion as he regains himself, mouth parting like he wants to say something. There's no anger anymore, just fear and pain as Stain wrenches his sword out.

"A message must be sent," Stain states over the ringing in Izuku's ears before the blade is slammed back into Iida's chest. He feels numb.

Shinsou shouts something, dropping Naomasa and Reo shakily pushes himself back up to his hands and knees.

Iida grunts, blood coming up. He struggles to keep his eyes open and

Midoriya's throat clamps shut on itself. They lock eyes with one another and for a moment it's like the rest of the alley disappears. There's a message in Iida's eyes, an apology.

"Keep your eyes open, Iida," Midoriya begs silently, *"Keep them open. You can do it. Don't close your eyes. Please. Iida, please. Keep your eyes open. Iida, keep your eyes open. Iida–"*

Iida's red eyes flutter shut.

They don't reopen.

Midoriya's mouth parts silently. Blood is roaring through his ears, drowning out the sound of Stain wrenching his blade out of Iida's armor for a final time. His mouth closes, then opens, and closes again. Stain turns, wiping *Iida's* blood off his katana.

Izuku's mouth opens and a broken scream escapes him. " *NO!* " His fingers twitch. His chest shudders, sun roaring with an insufferable heat that chars his bones. It leaves the villain eyeing him cautiously.

It takes only a few moments more for Midoriya to realize he's regained control of his body and Stain takes a step back as the fifteen-year-old rushes over to the other boy, eyes bloodshot and blurred with tears, snot already working to clog his nose and his throat. Izuku rolls Iida onto his back, desperately watching for signs of life.

There's one crackling, wet breath. And then there's nothing.

Shinsou hovers over his shoulder, staring on in disbelief.

The sun in his chest flickers out with the last, noiseless breath of the people he's failed to save, heroes with futures brighter than his.

"You killed him," Izuku croaks. "You killed him." His head turns jerkily towards Stain. "You," he croaks, standing on shaking legs. "You killed him."

That's how Aizawa Shouta finds them.

Chapter End Notes

> Your beloved detective is safe for yet another chapter, and Aizawa prepares to make his official entrance as the dadzawa you've always wanted. I wonder what kind of trauma counseling

awaits our three teenage protagonists :)
-
I know it's not Tuesday, but I don't think any of you understand just how long I've been waiting to post this chapter for everyone and as soon as I finished it I couldn't help myself from posting. This arc has been a very long time in the making and is something that has gone through many different iterations to get where it currently is. It was so much fun to write and I hope you all enjoyed it as much as I did! Until next time!

ps
ikit ikit ikit ikit ikit ikit ikit ikit ikit ikit

Constellation

Chapter Notes

TW :// blood , violence , mentions of death

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart!! (i hope i got all of them 😱)

itsnotdeviancyitsdigiorno

arlcn x

taztaztaz-blog x x x x

sorrel x

fretful-ferret x

“This is the first time we’ve patrolled together since we graduated,” Mic’s grin is what Aizawa can only describe as shit-eating. After the new local mandate, heroes were required to patrol in teams of at least two. And, since the events of the USJ, UA’s staff had been marked as probable targets of Stain, making this mandate all the more important for the like of them. Eraserhead was no exception to this rule.

“Eraserrrr~” Present Mic teases, wrapping an arm around the man’s shoulder as they walk. “You don’t seem happy to be going on a patrol with me.”

Aizawa buries his face into his capture weapon. “I’m fine.”

“It tends to get pretty busy around here with the stadium which is why I like patrolling over here,” Mic says. He lets his arm slide off Aizawa’s shoulder, falling back into a more professional demeanor when the two of them catch sight of a familiar hero passing overhead.

The hero spots them after a few moments, turning to make an abrupt landing beside them.

“Air Jet,” Aizawa greets, carefully studying him. “Where’s Iida?” Aizawa honestly wasn’t very well acquainted with the man, but he’d done his research on all the heroes his students were interning with. He has a clean, albeit small record. Iida had certainly gotten better

offers, even without placing during the sports festival. But Air Jet's quirk was similar enough to Iida's for the choice not to draw much attention.

The hero looks nervous. "There was an event going on in the stadium. We were separated in the crowd of people leaving."

Mic glances around the area, but Aizawa's eyes don't leave Air Jet. "You lost him."

"I– Yes."

"Do you think he might've returned to your office?" Mic asks from behind.

Air Jet shifts anxiously on his feet. "If he was there I would've gotten a call about it by now."

"We'll help look around. Call it in to your agency if you haven't already," Aizawa grunts, retreating into his scarf.

The hero seems to sag in relief. "Thanks. I'll let you know if I find him."

They separate from the hero, leaving him to scout the area from above as they continue to search on foot.

Soon enough the stadium that Mic had mentioned looms into view with the last trailing remains of the crowd that had separated Iida and Air Jet. His student, however, is nowhere to be seen.

"Something feels off," Aizawa murmurs his scarf.

Mic nods in agreement, a grim expression taking the place of his usually cheery one. "If he didn't go back to Air Jet's agency he would've at least tried to stay in the area."

Aizawa says nothing in response. A wrongness eats at him; a chanting whisper of *'nothing will be the same again'* settles in his chest. He curses under his breath, pushing forward and leaving Mic to trail after him. He'd known internships were a bad idea, he'd *known*. Barely any time has passed since the USJ, Piper was dead, the LOV was still on the loose, and the Hero Killer had decided suddenly to relocate to Musuta —

Aizawa freezes. He turns back to Mic, his unearthly green eyes almost

glowing in the gloom. “We’re looking for the Hero Killer,” Aizawa tells him.

“What?” He sounds confused, understandably so. “Why do y–”

“Because Iida will be looking for him too.”

That’s all it takes for the lightbulb to flicker on, for gravity to shift its axis, leaving them to scramble for purchase. They’d all seen the news, sprawled out on the couch after a long day while Oboro was calling in an order for takeout. Iida Tensei was at death's door, paralyzed from the waist down, his career as a hero ripped brutally from his grasp at the hands of Stain.

Aizawa is desperate to disprove the chanting in his chest.

Nothing will be the same again.

Nothing will be the same again.

That’s when they get the call. Aizawa’s phone buzzes in his pocket, an urgent dispatch request for all available heroes. Stain had been sighted. There’re no coordinates, only a vague, general location, but it’s all the two heroes end up needing.

It’s impossible to miss the scream.

It’s quiet, barely audible from this distance, but it strikes like a bolt of lightning, jolting them into action.

He doesn’t know how long it takes for them to get there. All he knows is that they get there *too late* . And that *nothing* will ever be the same again.

There’s six people crammed into the alleyway. Shinsou is helping another kid up to his left and there’re two people on the ground, one bleeding out next to the wall and the other face down in the middle of the alley. There’s two others as well, both poised in the middle, one crouched and one standing.

It takes Aizawa longer than he’d like to recognize the boy on the ground as his missing student. Iida, donned in everything but his helmet, lays prone on the concrete, unmoving.

The person crouching over him stands slowly. He doesn’t look at Aizawa, instead turning to the only person still standing when he’d

arrived.

His eyes turn a brilliant crimson upon recognizing the villain's silhouette. "Mic!"

The teenager picks up something metallic off the ground. The staff glints dimly in the darkness as the other hero rounds the corner.

There's a beat, a moment of hesitation, a lull in what surely must be Shouta's decision-making skills. The question escapes him subconsciously as he takes in the boy's form, the name on his lips nothing more than a mere whisper. "Piper?"

Nothing will ever be the same again.

Mic barely spares his husband a glance as he takes in the scene, just seconds behind him. Confusion floods through him as he too eyes the boy. Mic hesitantly calls out his student's name. It comes out slow, thick on his tongue like he's only meant to be testing it. "Midoriya?" The boy looks slowly back at them and the broken determination on his face alone is enough to throw Mic back into the USJ.

Aizawa's confusion dissolves. "Midoriya."

Yamada's however, only grows. "Piper?"

Aizawa is the first to move, stepping towards the teens, capture weapon rising around his shoulders. "What happened?" Aizawa asks without preamble.

Midoriya does not answer, choosing instead to turn back towards Stain. "Why."

The villain says nothing, watching the two heroes stationed behind Izuku. Mic drops down beside Iida, quirk ill-suited to such close quarters where he was more likely to hurt one of his allies.

Midoriya growls, charging at the man. Stain's attention finally returns to Izuku. "I asked why you killed him!" It's a raw, broken, exclamation.

Aizawa pauses at the words. He glances back at where Mic is hovering over Iida. There's a strained fear on his husband's face that hadn't

been there moments before. Something cold pulses through his limbs. “Mic, get them out of here and call for backup.”

Izuku clashes weapons with Stain, it’s violent and jarring and his fingers *hurt* from how tightly he’s gripping his staff. But the hurt grounds him, keeps him in the moment, keeps him fighting.

“Midoriya!” Aizawa barks, “Get back!”

Izuku does not listen. He spins away, staff twirling dangerously between his hands. There’s fire in his eyes and a cool numbness in his chest as a blade flies past his cheek, nicking his ear. It’s not much, but it’s enough to distract him and Stain takes the opportunity to viciously drive a second knife into his thigh. It hurts, of course it hurts. But Iida is lying cold behind him and the Detective is bleeding out and everyone else in the alley is still in danger. He grits his teeth and drives his staff directly into the villain’s diaphragm. Stain stumbles back, taking both his knife and Izuku’s blood with him.

The boy’s vision flashes white for a moment, grunting in pain. He feels seconds away from taking a knee just to take pressure off his leg.

“Izuku!” Reo cries, voice cracking with panic. Shinsou loosely grabs at his arm, preventing him from running forward.

Aizawa curses.

Midoriya readies another attack as Stain brings the bloodied blade to his mouth. He cleans it with a flick of his tongue.

Nothing happens.

Izuku’s attack goes through.

His staff cracks harshly against Stain’s jaw in almost the same spot as before, cleanly snapping the man’s head to the side and sending him stumbling. The villain takes a knee as Aizawa’s capture weapon whips out from behind Izuku. One strand latches onto the villain, the other rips the katana from his hand, throwing it away from them.

Stain’s head drifts slowly back towards them as he recovers from Izuku’s blow. His eyes narrow with understanding when they land on Eraserhead, flickering back towards Midoriya for only a movement before returning to the hero. He’s calm. Too calm for a captured

villain.

“It seems I’ve run out of time,” the villain states, “My job here, however, is already done.”

“Your job?” Izuku croaks. He can feel angry tears welling in his eyes and he hates that they’re there, hates that he’s showing such weakness in front of the enemy. “He was *fifteen. We’re only fifteen.”* The waterworks start in full then and he turns his face away to hide them, angry and embarrassed and grieving for a kid he really didn’t know all that well.

The same angry hurt that’d burned in Iida’s eyes now burns in Izuku’s. Stain takes note of it with narrowed eyes. “Careful not to lose your way, *hero* .”

“ *I’m not a hero* ,” Izuku grits out. He turns his head back towards where Present Mic has picked up Iida, cradling him gently against his chest. Izuku’s face twists, stricken with an indescribable grief. He turns away from the sight.

There’s sirens in the distance now, soft, barely there.

Stain flicks his wrist, a new blade sliding into place between his fingers. It’s a good size, but it’s small enough to be flung even in his restrained position. He flicks his hand and sends the blade flying. It spins through the air towards Aizawa.

Izuku sees it coming and skids into its path.

“Midoriya!”

It stabs painfully into his shoulder. He grunts in pain, shoulder jerking back from the impact. He folds into himself for a moment, taking in a shaking breath before slowly rising again. He grits his teeth as he stares down at the villain, pain and fear simmering brightly in his eyes. “I’m not a hero,” he repeats, “but I won’t let you hurt anyone else here.”

There’s a grim look on Aizawa’s face, but he doesn’t look away from Stain, *can’t* look away. “It’s over,” Aizawa states gruffly, tightening the capture weapon around the villain.

The sirens are growing louder by the second, but so is Stain’s impatience. *He cannot be stopped here.*

“Why are you doing this,” Shinsou croaks quietly from behind them, voice cracking like he’s been crying or is on the brink of doing so. “Why are you—” He’s got Naomasa’s arm slung around his shoulders, struggling beneath the man’s weight as Reo moves to help. His lilac eyes gleam fearfully but he has to do *something* . “ *Just why* .” It’s his last desperate attempt to get the villain to respond to him.

Stain’s eyes find Midoriya’s again. “It’s all for the sake…” he says carefully, “of a better society.” Fear freezes Shinsou in place as Stain stands slowly, arms still bound to his sides, mouth trickling blood, “Someone must purge the fakes… Someone must—”

Everyone feels the physical effect of the villain’s words. Terror’s clawed hand rakes its fingers through Shinsou’s hair, whispering to him endless nightmares. His legs tremble; his heart races.

“ *Someone must be stained with blood…* ”

Once he’s on his feet Stain strikes like a bolt of lightning, arms still bound to his sides, but legs free to swing a kick towards whoever’s unlucky enough to be in front of him. The spiked tips of his boots glint in the darkness as they arc through the air.

Aizawa grabs roughly at Izuku’s arm, trying to pull him away from the villain. But, the boy does not budge, planting a foot behind him to keep himself from being dragged away. Even in his sorry state he looks completely prepared to continue fighting. Midoriya is standing tall before them, surely just as scared as he and Reo. His legs too are shaking beneath him. All this time he’s been fighting for them, to protect them at the risk of his own safety. He too had witnessed the death of their teammate, had been there for his last breath. And yet, his stance does not waver.

“If I don’t fix it!” Stain shouts, eyes ablaze. Anyone can see he’s prepared to tear through everyone here if it means getting away; if it means continuing his mission.

Shinsou pinches his eyes closed and activates his quirk.

Stain’s eyes glaze over.

The alley falls quiet.

Midoriya’s knees buckle beneath him. He weeps.

Midoriya wakes to the sound of a heart monitor, familiar in a way he hoped it'd never be again. He'd stayed conscious long enough for the ambulance that arrived on scene to make it to the hospital. The murmur of paramedics calling his name, telling him to stay awake. He'd listened to them for as long as he could, but he'd just been so *tired* .

Waking up now is such a completely different feeling to the aftermath of the USJ however. Blood loss hadn't been a problem then. He's certain, now that he's woken up still slightly faint and miserably tired, that he would've been caught if it had been.

He's in a large communal room, empty all except for the bed across from his. Izuku's eyes fall groggily on the room's only other inhabitant. It takes a while for his eyes to adjust to the darkness, but Detective Tsukauchi Naomasa is unmistakable even in the dark.

He doesn't know how long he sits there staring at the man, watching the rise and fall of his chest and listening to the beeping of his heart monitor just a second ahead of Izuku's own when the door slides open quietly. It lets light from the hall seep across the tiled floor. The person that slips through it is nothing more than a silhouette in the darkness, but they pause upon seeing Izuku sitting up, awake.

"Midoriya," *and oh* , the woman's voice is familiar, a soft whisper usually reserved for late nights and early mornings spent in Reo's room. "How are you feeling?" Misaki asks. She spares a glance back at Naomasa before her dark eyes settle back on Izuku.

She's wearing scrubs. He forgot she was a nurse.

Midoriya's tongue feels heavy in his mouth. "How is he?" he croaks out.

Misaki's eyes are impossibly kind, even so, the smile on her lips does not reach them. "He'll be okay. You've only been out for a few hours," she explains gently, answering the unasked questions in his eyes. "Reo and your other friend are still talking with the police right now. Your mom is with them."

"What about Eraserhead?" His mouth is dry. "The heroes that were there, what about them?"

Misaki reaches out to take his hand between hers. She's wearing

gloves, some sort of latex surgical kind that wouldn't look out of place in a hospital. It's a foreign feeling compared to his mother's small, soft hands, but the feeling isn't unwelcome. The warmth of her hold seeps through the gloves, like a silent reassurance that everything will be okay. "Present Mic is with Reo and them. I think the black-haired one is… I think he's talking with the family."

She doesn't elaborate on who 'the family' is. She doesn't have to because Midoriya *knows* . He'd been there, he'd been complicit in the boy's death.

Misaki squeezes his hand gently, an inaudible warning to not indulge such thoughts. "Now, how do you feel?" she repeats.

He swallows thickly. "I could use some water."

Misaki eventually comes back with a bottle of water, doing what she can to distract him with idle chatter and Izuku lets her, desperate for it. She's buying time with stories of a young Reo, probably until the others return because now that he's looking more closely he can see the ruffled state of a few of the other beds around him.

She's in the middle of talking about Reo's prior fixation on Greek mythology when the boy himself slips quietly into the room. Just his posture alone gives away his exhaustion.

He pauses in the door as his mother turns in her seat. She scoots the chair back, giving the boy a better line of sight to where Midoriya's propped himself up in the bed.

"Izuku," Reo murmurs. He takes a cautious step towards the boy. In the light from the open door, Izuku can see that the cut on his cheek has healed completely, without even a bandage to cover the unblemished skin. And he's walking without so much as a hint of pain from where Stain had slammed his foot into his side. Even so, Reo almost stumbles towards him. He can't see it in the dark, but he can hear it in his voice. " *Izuku* ," the name breaks in his throat and once he's close enough Izuku can see the tears in his eyes.

This is the first time, Izuku realizes, that he's seen Reo genuinely cry. He's teared up before, angry with Izuku, with his self-endangerment. But he's never clung to Izuku like he is now, crying into his shoulder with barely repressed sobs. His grip is a little painful, tugging at least one of his injuries, but Izuku allows it. He clenches just as tightly to his friend, crumpling his shirt beneath trembling fingers.

They both watched someone die tonight, unable to protect the ones they love. Izuku had thrown himself at Stain and Reo had thrown himself over Iida.

Shinsou follows him into the room not long after with Present Mic in tow. He watches them silently from a distance. He sniffles once, twice. Tears build in his eyes despite how desperately he's trying to hold them back. Present Mic slips an arm around his shoulder, gently pulling him into his chest. It's soft enough for Shinsou to refuse should he wish, but he lets it happen. He presses his face into his shoulder, crying quietly, shoulders shaking.

Inko is the last to arrive. She does not cry, eyes instead hardened with concern. She eventually replaces Reo at his side, letting the last of his drying tears seep into her cardigan. She holds him tightly, wary of his wounds unlike Reo. The beating of her heart is slow and steady in his ear.

Misaki ushers the other two to bed, still tired from what he can only assume was a visit with Recovery Girl. She checks on Naomasa once before heading towards the door, waiting there for Inko.

Izuku's still *so tired.* She squeezes him tight once more before letting him settle back into bed. His eyes burn, impossibly dry after so much crying.

"Recovery Girl will be back in the morning," she murmurs softly into his hair, "get some more sleep."

Exhaustion pulls him under.

There's an alley in front of him, a café, a rooftop. Someone he knows is supposed to be Iida stands before him, perched at the edge of the building. He's donned in Piper's costume watching the sun rise over Musutafu, red as blood.

"Make sure not to lose him."

His foot slips off the edge, accidental in the way his face twists up in fear.

Izuku does not move to help him.

Izuku springs up, panting and out of breath. It's still late, the sky a

browned-pitch outside the hospital window. Reo's hand is on his shoulder. Izuku folds into himself for a moment, pressing trembling hands over his eyes and forcing himself to calm. He sucks in a deep breath, holding it for as long as he can manage before letting it out shakily. He peeks up at Reo from the corner of his eye. The older boy hovering at his bedside, concern shining in his eyes. He doesn't say anything, doesn't need to.

Midoriya shifts, scooting over to make room for him on the bed. There's a silent sort of agreement between them as Reo steps back and grabs the pillow off his bed and settles down beside Izuku. They lay down, watching one another in the darkness; the city lights illuminate the turmoil in their eyes. Honey-gold stares into green and green into honey-gold.

It feels like they were destined to find one another, like their meeting was foretold at the creation of the universe itself and surely they've known each other for just as long. A tumbler of amber and emeralds turns over endlessly.

Izuku does not fight against the fluttering fall of his eyelids.

Chapter End Notes

> So, I see it's been four weeks, I really just killed Iida and dipped huh akdhfadskjfahsdf, my job has been a lot to adjust to which is why this update has taken so long, BUT!! I did it, it's out!
> I hope you all enjoyed it as grueling as it was for me to write lmao, I feel like I've been saying this after every chapter now, but I've got big things planned and I can't wait for you all to see them play out!
> Until next time!
>
> (also happy birthday Tea my beloved :)

Blue Moon

Chapter Summary

> With Stain captured and Iida dead, Midoriya and company are left to lick their wounds and mourn the only way they know how.

Chapter Notes

> “To live is to hurt others, and through others, to hurt oneself. Cruel earth! How can we manage not to touch anything? To find what ultimate exile?”
> - Albert Camus

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Midoriya wakes early to see Reo’s face barely a hand's width from his. He’s still asleep, peacefully lost in his exhaustion. But there’s rustling behind him and he carefully tears his eyes away to roll himself over and see the source of it. He goes slowly, scared of waking Reo and finds Shinsou awake on the bed beside theirs. He looks lost in thought, brows furrowed as he stares down at his hands.

They’d watched someone die last night, someone they were both acquainted with after the sports festival. He must sense Izuku’s eyes on him because he eventually turns to look at him. “Midoriya,” the name seems to serve as some sort of confirmation for the boy, as if saying it will solidify his existence or clear his confusion.

“Izuku’s fine,” he murmurs quietly.

“Izuku,” Shinsou tries again, more softly this time. “What did Stain mean… when he said he’d keep that other guy alive for Piper’s sake?”

Izuku can only blink dumbly at the boy for a moment, heart rising in his throat. “What?”

“The detective that Stain spared,” Shinsou repeats, eyes flickering towards the man, “Why did he do that and why… Why did he say it like it was directed at *you* ?”

Izuku’s eyes shift towards the floor, looking away. “Detective Tsukauchi was the one working Piper’s case,” he says after a while, “but I don’t know anything more than that.” Izuku’s never been more thankful that the man himself is still asleep.

“He’s related to Reo, right?”

“His uncle,” Izuku confirms softly, glancing back at the boy just behind him.

“Th–”

The room’s door slides open, cutting Shinsou off. He falls silent as Recovery Girl hobbles inside, trailed closely by Dr. Sui. A notable somberness follows them in. Recovery Girl spares a glance at the still sleeping Reo as she approaches but doesn’t comment on the spectacle. “Good morning, boys.”

An automatic ‘good morning’ dies on its way out Izuku’s throat. Iida invades his head, what would the world without him look like?

“Midoriya, your wounds were stitches last night, but I didn’t want to try and use my quirk after how much blood you lost. You thankfully didn’t need any transfusions, but it was still better to let you sleep given your condition at that point.”

“Right,” Izuku murmurs, only half aware of the words she’s saying.

Dr. Sui is watching him carefully, the concern on her face is clear though Izuku hardly so much as takes note of her as Recovery Girl approaches his side of the bed.

His hands feel dirty, caked with an invisible grime. He glances down at them, flexing his fingers. And there, in the light, he can see blood dried between the creases where skin meets nail; staining the edges of his nail beds rusty red. And suddenly he realizes the grime was *not* invisible. Anyone who looked close enough could see it.

He doesn’t even know if it’s his or not.

Recovery Girl takes his hand, prepared to gently press her lips against the back of it. Izuku jerks away, violently and without hesitation.

He has blood on his hands.

He has blood on his hands.

His breath hitches, caught where the lump in his throat has formed. He can hear his name being called, can feel Reo shift beside him. He keeps his hands close to his chest, out of reach of anyone trying to grab them.

“Izuku,” Reo’s murmurs from beside him, voice just as calm and grounding as it’s always been, just as soft as the night he’d died. He sounds tired and groggy and Izuku really can’t make sense of any of the words but he listens until he *can* understand; till his breathing slows and the knot in his throat dissolves. And he feels *guilty* . Because Reo had been there *too* . Had done what he could to tend to Iida’s wounds and, in a last-ditch effort, had cast his body over Iida’s to protect him. He shouldn’t have to comfort Izuku, shouldn’t have to talk him down from a panic attack immediately after waking. They’d fallen asleep in each other's eyes, drowned in each other's turmoil.

He didn’t deserve this, didn’t need anymore on his already full plate. The tides of panic in Izuku’s chest ebb until he feels nothing but guilt. “Sorry,” the word is nothing but a whisper on his lips.

Reo stays silent beside him, content instead to lean his head against Izuku’s shoulder tiredly.

“There’s no need to apologize,” Recovery Girl assures him. She takes a step up on the seat between his and Shinsou’s beds. She hesitates for a moment, giving him time to pull away again if he wants. He gives her a gentle nod and she leans over to press a gentle kiss to his forehead instead.

The tingles start-up violently throughout his body, his shoulder, his abdomen, his leg, all the scratches and bruises are eaten, swallowed whole in the face of such a powerful quirk.

There will be no scars left behind.

2 · Trending in Japan

Stain

12,583 Tweets

Trending with **KIDS** and **Hero Killer**

△**732**▽ @squadgrimes · 3h

THEY CAUGHT **STAIN** ???

Cypher @HollowTriangles · 5h

YOU'RE REALLY TELLING ME THREE KIDS HELD OFF **STAIN** UNTIL HEROES SHOWED UP

Angst two raccoons in a trench coat ☻ @angstyBoodle · 3h

The name of **Stain's** last victim hasn't been released but their family has my condolences 🧢

Technotwt Squid Games @PigSquidGames · 12m

UPDATE: The final victim of the Hero Killer **Stain** is confirmed to have been a hero student attending UA

ran!🎗#722 @luzuru_ · 49m

STAIN ???????(;)4:$853/)8@),!

ShapesSpeak @shapeschat · 1h

cant believe they finally caught **Stain**

(◣ SAM ◢) @emerizard · 4h

Guys check lrt

this is what i was talking about earlier, like they caught **Stain** but at what cost

705 ||arney[7]**||** @arney_twt · 4h

so **Stain** really was in Musutafu, i thought it was just a rumor…

Leaf @LeafmeEalone · 1h

Bro… I know **Stain** like, isn't a good guy and kills people and stuff, but trying to kill kids is too far

Pebble Brain on the Brain @lov3joy · 2h

THEYRE JUST KIDS, THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED STOP **STAIN** ARE JUST KIDS

Buz □ || #704 @Buziieeee · 3m

wait so who did **stain** kill???

Lyons @lyons_eyey · 3h

FUCK, YOU'RE TELLING ME **STAIN** GOT CAUGHT?? NOOOOOOO 😭😭😭

The hospital keeps them all another night. Both Reo and Shinsou have already been fully healed from any wounds they had received, but Dr. Sui had explained that she's keeping them all for 'observation', which really, in Midoriya's opinion, feels more like she's making sure none of them have some sort of mental break as soon as her back's turned.

Reo's back in his bed for the night and though he's still facing Izuku, his eyes are closed, his breathing soft and slow. He's dreamless from the look of it.

Izuku looks away, staring out across the room. He'd woken to another nightmare an hour ago, heart fluttering with panic. His breakdown had been quiet though, had stifled it enough not to wake anyone around him. He's sitting up now, the bed elevated to keep him upright. He can feel sleep tugging at him but resists it in favor of watching the rise and fall of Naomasa's chest across from him. The man had evidently woken up for a short time earlier that day after sleep had reclaimed Izuku in the wake of Recovery Girl's quirk and Izuku had come to to find Reo's eyes red and puffy with the news. It'd instilled a sense of relief in him, *at least they'd saved one person.*

But there's something else in his chest, something dangerous building up. Stain knew he was Piper, Shinsou was questioning whether he was. Both Eraserhead and Present Mic had shown up just in time to see him fight with a bo staff in hand though neither had come to him bearing any suspicions. Mic had stopped by earlier to check in on them, but he'd yet to see even a glimpse of Aizawa.

The three of them had watched Iida die, but none of them had been particularly close with the boy. Aizawa, however, had been his teacher, had been one of the ones to personally train him in the pursuit of a better tomorrow.

Someone would have to tell the rest of the boy's class as well.

He wonders if Aizawa would be the one to do it.

Izuku catches his lower lip between his teeth, biting down. He stares at Naomasa, brows furrowed in a pained grimace.

The man groans softly, turning over. His eyes flutter open groggily and he blinks them to adjust to the darkness. Naomasa looks around confusedly, still half-asleep and when his head finally turns in Izuku's directions, they lock eyes from across the room.

There's a moment of silence, then a, "Go back to sleep, Detective," as Izuku gently urges him back to bed. There's a pained sort of relief twisting the smile Izuku offers him.

Naomasa looks at him strangely for a moment before eventually conceding. His head falls back tiredly on his pillow.

He sleeps.

The next morning Naomasa wakes like he'd had a dream. Not necessarily a bad one, but a good one that turned out to be nothing more than his imagination. Izuku can tell from the disappointment in his eyes.

Sansa Tamakawa, someone he recognizes from his time as Piper, shows up not long after they wake to sit with him. The feline's shoulders are tense, stiff with a carefully hidden anxiety as he talks idly with Naomasa and Reo.

All of them are fully healed now, with only Naomasa bearing any

scars to prove it'd even happened. But, Sansa still worries. The feline doesn't stay long, but Izuku can see the reluctance in the dejected swivel of his ears when he checks the time. There's a soft smile on Naomasas's face as he leaves and Izuku realizes rather violently that he doesn't actually know if anyone's told the man of Iida's death. He'd been unconscious for their entire fight with Stain. It's possible he wasn't even awake when Iida had arrived either.

He'd find out eventually if he didn't know already. Midoriya can only hope he's not there when he does.

They're all discharged later that day with little fanfare; sent home with well wishes and somber faces.

Izuku doesn't go to school for the next few days, but neither does Reo or Shinsou.

They all carefully skirt around the subject of Iida's death when they're together, but it's clear from the dark circles blooming beneath their eyes that they're all still haunted by sleepless nights. For now, it's enough for them to sit quietly in each other's presence, mourning in their own ways.

But where the others begin the slow process of healing, Izuku lets his wounds fester for days, eating him alive. He replays the events over again in his head, agonizing over everything he could've done. What he could've said to end it without bloodshed. He goes even further, rethinking the details of Piper's death now that he's seen the consequences. He wonders how he could've done it differently to prevent all of this.

Iida's death, in the end, was Stain's decision. He could've merely injured the boy, could've maimed him, could've done anything besides slam his blade through the fifteen-year-old's chest.

Reo knows this. Shinsou knows this. Even if there's a seed of guilt that eats at them they know the reality of what took place that night. They know not to blame themselves at the end of the day even if it's hard for them to accept.

Midoriya too knows this. But knowing doesn't change anything. Midoriya could've stopped it. If he'd been more patient, if he'd thought things out more, if he'd been stronger, faster, smarter, he could've saved him, could've prevented it all.

If Piper was still alive Naomasa wouldn't have been targeted in the first place.

Stain never would have come to Musustafu and Iida would have never run into him.

" *Iida would've tracked Stain down no matter where he was,* " the voice in his head sounds distinctly like Reo.

Izuku sighs, looking over at the boy. He's hunched over his work table, sketching out blueprints for something new he'd come up with some thirty minutes ago.

Shinsou had been over earlier, sprawled out on the bed next to Izuku while watching conspiracy theory videos, his extra earphone shoved in Izuku's direction when he'd shown an interest in one of the clips involving a nameless underworld cryptid.

Reo had distracted them both at one point towards the end of the video, intent on explaining his sudden idea for them before he'd started sketching the blueprints he's working on now. He'd been midway through telling them how he'd landed on the idea when the video ended and another one began auto-playing through their headphones in its place.

"The death of the vigilante Pied Piper surprised everyone," the narrator starts, "Thousands took to the internet to mourn in the wake of their death, all wondering what happened, why, *how* ? *How did Piper die?* That's the question on everyone's minds. But, it seems that even the police aren't sure w—," the voice cut out abruptly as Shinsou paused the video, a gentle flush rising to his cheeks.

The damage, however, had already been done.

Izuku's eyes held a far-off look, his muscles tensed, blood rushing loudly through his ears. Shinsou had slipped the phone back into his pocket, quickly turning his attention back to Reo. There was no evidence that either of them had noticed the molten core of distress that had suddenly bubbled up inside Izuku's chest.

Shinsou left soon after, leaving Izuku and Reo alone with nothing more than each other and their thoughts.

"You okay?" Reo does not look at Izuku as he asks it, continuing to

work on his blueprints.

Izuku swallows thickly, lowering himself back on the bed. “I’m fine.”

Seems he did notice.

There’s a moment of silence and the scritch of Reo’s pencil slows before stilling completely. “Izuku–” he starts.

Midoriya cuts him off, nerves tightening the muscles in his throat, “I’m sorry,” he states quickly, “You went through the same thing I did and I’m still here making you play therapist.”

“If I didn’t want you to tell me I wouldn’t have asked, Izuku,” Reo responds quietly. “I’m your friend.”

“But, it *hurts* you,” Izuku says with a near whine.

“To live is to hurt others,” Reo quotes, voice a low murmur, “and through others, to hurt oneself. If it’s for you I’d do anything. I’d hurt a thousand times over just to save you from one. You’d do the same, wouldn’t you?” It’s not phrased like a question, but Izuku still answers it like one.

“Of course,” he breathes.

“Friendship is a consensual agreement between two people to hurt and be hurt by one another. That’s what caring for someone is all about. When they hurt you’ll hurt as well. There’s limits of course,” Reo chuckles, “as with all things, but my *point* ,” he emphasizes, “is that I’m always here for you.” He turns then, finally looking back at Izuku. There’s a sad sort of understanding in his eyes. “I’m the only one who knows,” he whispers, “the only one you can come to when Piper’s struggles overlap with yours. I can’t pretend to know what you’re going through, but I can listen. If it’s for you I can listen.”

“ *I’m the only one that knows… the only one you can come to when Piper’s struggles overlap with yours.* ” The words loop viciously inside Izuku’s head even days after Reo had said them. “*… the only one that knows… the only one that knows.* ” Birthed like a new star, violent and impossible to ignore with its newfound luminosity, the words *haunt* him. What was meant to be something comforting had twisted within the context of everything that had come before it.

At therapy he'd avoided the subject of Iida's death; buried it deep inside him, let it harden beneath the slow-building pressure in his chest.

"*... the only one that knows...* "

Inko had booked him an emergency appointment for the day after he'd been released from the hospital. Oboro had already known about Iida's death before he'd arrived. Izuku's sure Inko had been the one to tell him about his involvement in Stain's capture. The man was gentle in alluding to the topic, but he hadn't forced the subject when Izuku tactfully ignored it and he hadn't shown any sort of disappointment when it became obvious that Izuku wasn't ready to talk about it just yet.

But now he can't get Reo's words out of his head. He'd been reliant on his friend for so long. It was just like Reo had said: he was the only one he was able to turn to about anything that was bothering him. Even now with a proper therapist at his disposal Izuku had been unable to talk about the things he actually needed to. Time and time again he'd been forced to burden Reo with things he shouldn't have to be.

" *I'm the only one you can come to when Piper's struggles overlap with yours.* "

Reo was right, but he *shouldn't be* . Izuku has a decision to make, one that could help both him and Reo if it went the way he hoped it would. But if it *didn't* ... if it didn't then Izuku would lose *everything* .

Izuku stands hesitantly outside of the LC Counseling Center, staring at the sign. This is the second time he's been here this week, but he's alone today; finally able to convince his mother that he could handle going alone. *It's better this way* , he thinks.

He has plans to meet up with Reo and Shinsou after this.

He wonders if he'll be able to make it or not.

Oboro Shirakumo. He has two rings on his finger, and three scars over his eye, and hair that shifts cloud-like under the influence of what has to be a quirk. He likes the color blue and is good at listening and

besides this Izuku knows next to nothing about the man.

“It’s good to see you again,” he greets as Izuku takes a step inside the office.

Izuku offers him a small smile in return but it’s uncertain and barely there and now the man knows there’s something on his mind. He takes a seat in his usual spot but doesn’t say anything when Oboro asks how he’s been since their last visit. Izuku sits in contemplative silence instead, staring at his hands.

“ *I’m the only one.* ”

Izuku takes a deep breath.

“I'm quirkless,” the words feel strange to say to someone who has logically already read all of his files. But, saying it takes a weight off of his chest. “That's why UA wouldn't let me into the hero course.”

He thinks it’s a good place to start, it’s where it had all began after all. Midoriya's rejection from UA would become Piper's origin story.

Oboro listens to him without interruption. They’re all things that the man knows, but it's important that Izuku says it first.

“Hero work is dangerous, especially when you don't have a quirk suited for it. But, I'd trained for *so long,*” Izuku stresses. Sorrow eats at his chest, threatening to choke him up. “But they were right. Even with what training I'd done it wouldn't be enough to both save people and protect myself. Because that's the thing,” he swallows thickly, voice strained, “as a hero you have to be able to protect yourself too. Anyone can save other people, but you have to be strong in order to *keep* saving people. And that's what no one tells you.” He takes in a shuddering breath, collecting himself. “From a legal standpoint,” he starts again, refusing to meet the man’s eyes, looking pointedly at his hands, “you aren’t allowed to contact any authorities if I were to ever, *hypothetically*, confess to any past crimes as long as neither myself nor anyone else is in any more potential danger, correct?”

Oboro watches the boy carefully, legs crossed. “That’s correct, yes.”

“So,” Izuku murmurs softly, unsure, *scared* . This was the tipping point, the moment that would decide everything. “If I were to ever *hypothetically* admit to having been a vigilante in the past in order to cope with years worth of bullying and being outright rejected from UA’s hero course, you wouldn’t be allowed to tell anyone else, right?”

Shirakumo can feel himself tense but maintains his calm exterior. “That’s oddly specific for a hypothetical.”

“And that’s not an answer,” Izuku says quietly, he shifts his gaze up, meeting the man’s eyes for only a brief second before looking down again.

The man sets his notepad to the side, leaning forward, opening his posture. “As long as you are, hypothetically of course, no longer participating in any illegal activities and neither you nor anyone else is in danger because of your past actions, then no. I would not be able to tell anyone.”

Midoriya nods almost absentmindedly, head bowed over his lap. “That’s good,” he replies, voice cracking. He bites down on his lip, tears burning at the corners of his eyes.

Shirakumo specialized in adolescent therapy, as such he’s watched many kids just like Midoriya Izuku break in front of him in similar fashions. Oboro himself had once broken like this in front of his own therapist at Midoriya’s age, newly blind in one eye and pulled from UA’s hero course by his parents for reasons beyond his control. He allows the boy a moment to gather himself again. Izuku swipes discreetly at the bottom of his nose.

“Say,” Midoriya murmurs hoarsely, “You ever heard of the vigilante Pied Piper?”

Chapter End Notes

> Oboro Shirakumo my beloved.
>
> So, Izuku has finally revealed to someone other than Reo and Stain his vigilante identity and it's to none other than the man married to the hero still mourning Piper's death. There's a lot I skipped over in this chapter, but I'm trying not to drag everything (aka I was excited to get to the Oboro scene and didn't want to wait any longer askdjfhadjskf)
>
> It's been taking longer to get updates out with work being what it is so my regular schedule has gone out the window, no more Tuesday updates unfortunately, you get them whenever I have the motivation to get through it kasdjhfajdsk but anyways I hope everyone enjoyed it! It was a hell of a chapter to write lmao
>
> Until next time!

Circumpolar

Chapter Summary

> “Say,” Midoriya murmurs hoarsely, “You ever heard of the vigilante Pied Piper?”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

FANART!!!

bloustorm

Yabee_Tea

definitely-maybe-not-a-crytpid

taztaztaz-blog x x

arlcn (tw blood) x

sorrel x x

fretful-ferret x x x x x x x x x x x x x x

For as long as Oboro has been a therapist there are still people that step into his office that manage to surpass his expectations of them. Because what Izuku says does more than simply surprise him. It leaves him shocked, so much so that he’s worried he may have let it show on his face. But, it makes sense, what the boy is implying.

“He’s dead, Oboro,” Aizawa’s voice is strained in his memories. *“The kid that saved me is dead.”*

But he wasn’t. He was alive, sitting in front of Oboro. And there’s a moment, impossibly short, where he feels a flash of annoyance towards the boy Aizawa was currently mourning for. The feeling, however, is gone as soon as he registers it.

Puzzle pieces fall into place, few and far between, because really what he learned of Piper was strictly through osmosis, but everywhere they landed they fit. Oboro can see it, had seen it in the swing of the boy’s staff at the sports festival and how comfortably he fought with it.

Their first session makes sense now. “ *Self-destructive… I tend to get self-destructive… I kept putting myself in dangerous situations* .”

“I never tried to kill myself. I never *wanted* to die.” Izuku croaks, “But I wanted to save people and I was willing to die *for* that. I was hurting myself by trying to protect others and in turn I was hurting the people closest to me.” Midoriya drops into a whisper, voice raw like an open wound. “That's why no one so much as questioned me. That's why everyone believed me when I said I'd jumped off a building trying to kill myself.” Izuku’s desperate to explain it to him, desperate for him to understand, desperate to get it out. Reo had lived through it with him, but Oboro Shirakumo was an outsider to his story. With each word the anxiety in his chest builds, his speech quickens. The open wound in his chest weeps along with him. His blood seeps into his chair, spilling down the front onto the carpet. It stains his clothes, the chair, the floor, *his hands* . It coats everything in vermilion, as red as Iida’s eyes, as red as Eri’s. He’s not even sure if half of what he’s saying is coherent or identifiable as a known language. He’s crying but he doesn’t know when it even started.

Midoriya explains it all to him, he tells him of the little girl named Eri, of Overhaul and the USJ, of *Aizawa* and the nomu that had almost killed both of them. He explains the death of Piper and its unforeseen consequences.

And then Oboro *realizes* , understands exactly why Izuku had been skirting the subject of the Iida boy’s death. “ *Stain* killed Iida. But Stain was only in Musutafu because of *Piper* .” Midoriya was not only blaming himself for failing to save the boy just an arm's length away from him, but also for leading Stain right to him.

Oboro can tell from the awkward pauses in the boy’s story that there are things being intentionally left out. But, it’s enough, not everything has to be explained in one day, not everything has to be explained at all.

“Thank you,” Oboro tells him softly. There’s no note of pity, no judgment or horror, only a cloud-like compassion that Izuku hadn’t been expecting. “You’ve been through so much. I’m proud of you for finally being able to open up about it. It was a hard decision to come to, wasn’t it?”

The boy can only nod, scared he’ll start crying again if he tries

replying. He takes a moment to compose himself. “You won’t tell anyone?” Izuku croaks.

Oboro smiles at him softly, sadly. “I won’t.”

Izuku lets out a shaky breath, relief flooding through him. He presses the palms of his hands against his eyes until sparks of color erupt from the darkness. “ *Thank you.* ”

They talk for a long time after that, well past their usual time but Izuku’s never been able to say any of it. All of his sins, his trauma, his *death*. Reo had been there to experience it with him to an extent, but there wasn’t anything quite like being able to *say* it.

Everything feels light now, but there’s still a shadow lurking in the back of his head, following him home. He hadn’t told Oboro everything, even in his sorry state he’d had enough common sense not to carelessly mention secrets that weren't his to share. Reo’s involvement was locked behind a vaulted door. It was a secret that Izuku was ready to take to his grave if his identity was ever exposed.

However, Reo was the reason he’d come to Oboro with Piper’s story in the first place.

“ *I’m the only one that knows…* ”

Without realizing Izuku had made Reo bear the burden of Piper’s identity by himself. There are few things he thinks he’ll ever regret more in his life than what he’d subjected Reo to. The guilt was a living thing, curled up at the base of his stomach with no way out, lashing out whenever Reo was in proximity.

This guilt would be something he’d have to work through by himself. But, he’s already learned a lot from his sessions with Oboro and he’s sure he’ll continue to learn a lot in the future. He can only hope it’ll be enough to work through the things he’ll never be able to talk about.

Midoriya does not tell anyone what he told Oboro. Does not tell anyone about the utter relief in his chest that turns to fear when he thinks of ever explaining to Reo all that he’s now admitted to that man.

When he gets home and Inko nervously asks how his session went he

cries again, blubbering to her that they're all good tears. And when Reo doesn't *ask* but his eyes hold that curiousness that he's never quite able to dispel, Izuku tells him that things will be better from now on, and he *means* it. Things will get better. They *will* heal. The swirling mass of guilt in his chest *will* fade. He has to believe it. If he doesn't believe it then he'll have nothing.

He knows it won't happen instantly. He knows his nightmares will continue to haunt him; knows that the guilt over Iida's death will continue to consume him. He knows that the black hole rumbling at the center of all his troubles will continue trying to drag him in. He'll have to fight the pull, fight the urge to surrender himself over to it. It was just as his mother had said: he has to choose to be stronger than the weakest part of himself. Even if it was hard, even if the foreseeable future was nothing but an uphill battle. He would reach the peak of the mountain eventually, dawn would break on the other side. The sun would rise tomorrow, and the day after that, and it would continue to rise every day thereafter, waiting for the moment Izuku finally got a view from the top.

Taking A Break (for now)

374,477 views · 1 day ago

LilacMinds

201k subscribers

Firstly thank you to everyone for 200k subscribers! That's such a huge number to me, I originally had a 200k special planned, I'll still be posting it at some point, but it's put on hold due to some irl stuff happening. I'll be taking a break from some of my more detective related content for a bit in order

SHOW MORE

Comments 1,953

📌 Pinned by LilacMinds

LilacMinds 1 day ago

I'll still be active on my other social media platforms btw, go follow

them if you want to stay up to date for my come back and what I'll be doing in the meantime

snarlsnort 1 day ago

:((sad to see you go, i'll definitely see you on twitter though!!

Ell [o] Ell 5 hours ago

Congrats on 200k 🎉🎉

Akihito Jun 18 hours ago

Take all the time you need! I really enjoy your content, so it's definitely worth the wait, but don't feel pressured to make any content just to cater to us!

jackdaw cs 1 day ago

Good luck, man!

Muffibhead 12 hours ago

LLLLLL don't forget about us

snarlsnort 8 hours ago

why not just disappear off the internet, then people could theorize about the cryptid cc lilacminds that vanished from all online platforms 🤔 (NO IT WOULD'VE BEEN PERFECT TOO SINCE YOUR LAST VIDEO WAS TALKING ABOUT HOW PIPERS DEATH WAS A COVERUP)

edited comment

Out of all the students in UA's history, Midoriya's sure he holds the record for most days missed without repercussions. Not even a talk with the principal was on his itinerary after missing what had to have been two weeks at this point. He'd kept up with all his missing school work though, which he guesses is the important part of it all.

They all start back on the same day and they meet up with Shinsou just outside the school gates. No one offers the three of them any strange looks as they pass through the halls. Izuku had expected there to be rumors at the very least, but he was thankful their involvement with Stain was being kept under wraps. Even if he wasn't sure how long it'd stay like this.

They part ways with Reo in the hall. And as soon as they enter their class all eyes turn to him and Shinsou. Izuku already had a set reputation for missing an obscene amount of days, but now both he and Shinsou had been missing for close to a week.

"Where have you guys been?" Midoriya doesn't remember the girl's name, only that she was good friends with Zheng. It's said in a lighthearted manner, but Izuku has heard enough seemingly innocent questions just like it at Aldera to immediately be on alert.

Unlike Izuku, Shinsou doesn't hesitate to answer, "Playing hooky."

The girl raises a brow, unimpressed. "For a whole week?" A devilish smirk pulls softly at her lips, dangerous in a way that Izuku was familiar with. "Are you sure you two didn't get committed to the psych ward again?" She laughs. "I can understand the quirkless kid, but why'd you follow him there, Shinsou?"

Izuku pales. He'd been expecting something. But expecting something is never able to prepare him for what that something actually ends up becoming. *How did she know?* His eyes flicker to Zheng, unsure of what to do. She turns away, making no move to stop her friend.

" *Nakano Yua.* " Present Mic's voice booms through the classroom from the doorway. Izuku flinches, started by the sudden noise as everyone's attention snaps towards the hero and the girl, Nakano, whips towards him in *fear*. " *Come with me.* " His voice is low, dark. Izuku doesn't think he's ever heard him this angry before.

Nakano stands, shaky on her feet and follows the man out.

Everyone watches her go, silent as she disappears out the door and silent still in the moments after. Shinsou tugs at his sleeve, pulling

Izuku towards their desks as the class erupts into low whispers once they're sure there's no longer anyone outside to hear.

"You okay?" Shinsou asks quietly as they take their seats.

"I'm used to it," Izuku replies softly. He feels somewhat dazed from the girl's words, not surprised, but caught off guard. It's been a while since he's found himself in this position: the target of bullying with classmates who are willing to overlook hateful words. As much as Izuku wants to feel surprised at the sudden backlash, he really isn't. It scares him how easy it'd been for him to fall back into familiar routines.

"That's not what I asked," Shinsou states.

Izuku takes a moment to rethink the question. "I'm fine," he says after a time and he means it. He's heard worse from people he'd considered friends. "It caught me off guard, but that's about all."

"Present Mic will take care of her," Shinsou reassures him.

"You think?" It's a genuine question on Izuku's part.

Shinsou looks at him as if he's grown a third eye. "Have you met him? I'll be surprised if that girl ever manages to set foot in the classroom again."

"You think she'll get expelled?"

"She'll be suspended at the very least," Shinsou relents, "If he goes to the principal like I think he will then it won't even matter who her parents are. Nezu takes stuff like this seriously."

Izuku stays silent, thinking back to the conversation he had had with the principal over issues like these. He was still wary to believe Nezu's words, but he could tell now that UA was nothing like Aldera had been. Present Mic's interference just minutes before was proof enough of this. He still wonders what would happen if they ever discovered what Bakugou had done in middle school. If they ever find out that he'd told Izuku to take a swan dive off the roof he wonders whose side they would take: one of their star hero hopefuls or Midoriya Izuku.

Present Mic does not return to their classroom before the end of homeroom. Neither does Nakano Yua.

Class proceeds as normal. Izuku turns in all his missing work. Vlad King teaches P.E. Then Shinsou gets pulled out in the middle of class. And ten minutes later so does Zheng Bao. Neither of them return before the start of lunch.

Shinsou shows up again part of the way through their lunch hour sporting a sour expression. Izuku had hastily explained some of the situation to Reo before he'd arrived, but even Izuku wasn't sure what had taken place after the boy left.

"They'll call for you next," Shinsou informs him, sitting down with his tray of food. "I can't believe she tried to use Zheng as an excuse for that shit."

Izuku gives him a confused look. "Did she say Zheng told her to say it? Is that why she got pulled out?

Shinsou takes a bite of his food. "The sports festival," he explains, "Her and Zheng are friends so Zheng must've told Nakano about our match. I've said it before and I'll say it again, Zheng has every right to hate me. But since the beginning the only person she's been taking it out on is *you*, Izuku."

Reo looks between the two of them. "What?"

"Zheng was the one to leak the fact that Izuku's quirkless," Shinsou murmurs quietly.

Reo sends him a hurt expression. "You told me that was an accident."

"It wasn't," Izuku murmurs halfheartedly. He looks to Shinsou. "I haven't told him what Nakano said today either."

"What happened?" Reo questions, "It seems if I ask Izuku he'll just downplay it."

The boy's lips thin. "Nakano somehow knew that Izuku was in the psych ward and made a joke about it in front of the class just as Present Mic walked in. She tried to use what happened between me and Zheng during the sports festival as an excuse for why she said it."

"And that's why you and Zheng got pulled out of class?" Izuku asks.

Shinsou nods grimly. "I've been put on probation, but from what I can tell it's more out of formality considering I think Nakano's looking at a three-day suspension at the very least. "

Reo scowls. “That’s it?”

“It wasn’t that bad,” Izuku tries, “It’s not like she told me to kill myself.”

“Why is that your standard for behavior?” Reo asks, his disbelief obvious, “Have other people told you to do that?”

It’s only meant to be a rhetorical question, but Izuku falls silent nonetheless.

Reo pales. “Are you serious?” then, “Was it someone here?”

Izuku bites his lip. He hadn’t confessed this to anyone yet. Even Oboro, who now knew of Piper’s identity, wasn’t fully aware of what had taken place at Aldera. “It happened in middle school,” he says softly, “They go here now as well though. And before you ask I’ve already handled it.”

“Obviously you didn’t if they still go here,” Reo hisses.

But, Izuku had, in his own way. Perhaps it wouldn’t be seen as suitable retribution to some, but Izuku *knew* Bakugou, had known him longer than anyone else. Izuku didn’t want to ruin his life. There was too much trauma Izuku would have to dig up for that. There are still things Izuku isn’t over, some things that he doesn’t think he’ll ever be. But, he was content in watching the boy suffer, content to know that Bakugou would never have a determinable victory over Izuku. “I did,” Izuku reassures, a small smile crawling across his face. And it’s not much, but it’s enough for Reo to understand that he means it. He turns back to Shinsou. “You think they’ll call for me soon, then?”

He nods. “Probably. I want to say I don’t know why they’re waiting so long, but given the entire ‘well he said, she said’ debate I just went through I can understand.”

“Did they contact your parents?” Reo asks.

Shinsou nods grimly. “I think they’re contacting everyones’.”

Izuku knows it’s coming, this doesn’t make him anymore prepared when he’s pulled out of Midnight’s class. The last time he’d been called to the principal’s office, Izuku was still Piper and believed he was under threat of discovery via Nezu’s superintelligence. Now

there's no such concern, but there's still a seed of anxiety laying roots down in his chest.

The receptionist greets him with a smile. "Midoriya, right? He's waiting for you in his office."

Izuku nods, turning towards the door. He pauses just before it, sucking in a breath to prepare himself. He knocks. "Principal Nezu, it's Midoriya Izuku."

There's a muffled, "Come in," from the other side and Izuku pushes the door open, swallowing his nerves. "Midoriya," Nezu greets, "would you like some tea?"

Izuku takes a seat on the same couch he'd sat on at the start of the semester. "Yes, please."

Nezu smiles, hopping from his seat to set about making them both a cup of tea. "I wish we were meeting under better circumstances," he states. Izuku offers him no response. Once the water is set to boil, he speaks again. "How are you feeling?"

Izuku takes a moment to think over the question, "Nervous," he answers truthfully.

"You're not in any trouble," the principal reassures him.

Izuku nods. "I'm aware."

They enter another bout of silence. Once again Nezu is the one to break it. "Obviously you were present for what took place this morning. I want you to know that we're taking appropriate measures to punish those involved."

Izuku remains quiet.

The teapot whistles. Nezu's eyes flicker towards it before taking a moment to finish preparing their drinks. He sets one on the table in front of Izuku, the other one he takes for himself. Before long he's back on the couch opposite of Izuku, letting his tea cool before taking a sip. "You've been through a lot," Nezu says. His voice is soft in a way Izuku hadn't expected. "More than you should've and I'm sorry for that."

Izuku can tell he's no longer talking about today's incident. Iida's face drifts to the forefront of his mind, taking his attention. There's blood

painted across the backs of his eyelids, threatening to pull him away from reality. He takes in a deep breath, releasing it shakily. He lets his eyes close as he takes another sip of his drink. He refocuses, attempting some of the techniques Oboro had taught him in previous sessions. They help to some extent. His eyes flutter open again.

“Nakano will be suspended for several days,” Nezu informs him, “When she returns she’ll be put under probation and transferred to class 1-E. If another incident like this occurs she’ll be expelled; she is aware of this.”

Despite Izuku’s calm exterior, he can feel his nerves eating at him. He keeps careful eye contact with the principal as he takes another sip of his own tea. It’s good, whatever it is. “How did she know about my hospitalization?” It takes everything he has in him to keep his voice steady.

“Her father is employed at the facility you were staying in. She wouldn’t admit to it, but our best guess is that he may have let it slip that he recognized you during the sports festival.”

Izuku lets the cup linger by his lips as he considers his options.

“We’ve also been made aware of the situation with Zheng Bao. Nakano’s actions are her own, but what happened today was a direct result of Zheng’s influence. ”

“Nezu-san,” Izuku starts softly, “at the start of this school year you told me that you took things like bullying and discrimination seriously. I’ll be honest in saying I didn’t believe you.”

Nezu says nothing in response, waiting instead for Izuku to finish.

“Thank you for proving me wrong.”

“I wish there hadn’t been a reason for me to need to.”

“Even so,” Izuku states, “Thank you.”

There’s a knock at the door behind them, drawing both their eyes. “Nezu-san,” the receptionist calls through the door, “Midoriya Inko is here.”

Nezu’s eyes flicker back to him. “All guardians had to be informed, I’m afraid.”

A sad smile graces Izuku's lips. "So I've been told."

The principal turns back to the door. "Let her in," he calls.

Inko's face is wrought with hellfire and fury, but there's also a nervousness in the furrow of her brows. It was rare for Inko to get called up to any of Izuku's schools. At Aldera it'd only ever been for injuries too large for Izuku to hide and even those had been written up as accidental incidents. He can tell she expects the same here. But, once her eyes have landed on him the tension seems to leave her in one big breath. The anger is still there, right along with the concern.

"Hi, Mom," he says softly. He sets his teacup down, standing to accept the hug that he's sure is coming.

Sure enough, as soon as she's close enough she pulls him into a hug, briefly checking him over. "Are you okay? You're not hurt anywhere, right?"

"I'm fine mom," his gentle laugh is muffled in her shoulder.

"Midoriya-san," Nezu greets, "would you care for a cup of tea?"

Her attention returns to the principal. "No thank you," she replies cautiously. She pulls away from their hug, still worried and unsure, but now that Nezu has recaptured her attention the anger returns.

Nezu's attention turns momentarily to Izuku. "You're welcome to stay if you'd like, but we'll just be discussing the same things I did with you if you want to wait outside or head back to class."

Izuku nods. "I've probably missed enough of my classes as is," he chuckles, smiling gently at her. "I'll see you after school?"

There's a soft reluctance in her face, but she bobs her head in agreement. "I've been meaning to have a one on one with you, Principal Nezu." It's a threat. Izuku can tell from the hardness in his voice and for a moment he wonders if he should stay just in case something happens.

Nezu's amicable smile does not waver. "I can say the same."

Izuku gets out while he still can.

The last time Aizawa and Naomasa met was long before Piper's death, in a meeting where they were planning for a raid on a little house in

search of a girl with white hair and red eyes. They'd found Piper inside instead, beating one of Overhaul's most trusted subordinates senseless on the floor of the kitchen.

Naomasa could've stopped him then, could've prevented the boy's death in the ultimate scheme of things.

But, Piper was dead now and death was a cruel mistress from whom people did not come back. Naomasa stares into his coffee. He's not quite sure why the hero had asked him here, not unless it has something to do with the death of the boy Stain had killed. Aizawa had yet to say anything past a greeting when he first arrived.

It's early afternoon, still school hours despite Aizawa's presence. "Midoriya Izuku, you're familiar with him, right?" Aizawa eventually asks. He doesn't turn to look at Naomasa, eyes trained blankly on the wall to their right.

Naomasa looks up from his coffee, surprised by the question. "Yes?" It sounds more like a question than an actual answer. "We've met a few times. He's good friends with my nephew."

"He's quirkless," Aizawa states. There's no malice in the words.

Naomasa's brows furrow together. "Yes."

"Did you see any of his fights during the sports festival?"

Naomasa freezes for a moment, doused in icy ocean waters. He does what he can to shake off memories of the beach. "*No*," he rasps.

The hero looks up at him then, *really* looks at him. They both look tired, dark circles bruise-like under their eyes and mourning for kids they shouldn't have had to bury. "He reminds me of Piper," Aizawa states softly.

Naomasa feels himself tense, hands tightening around his mug. "Why are we here, Aizawa?" he asks hoarsely.

"Hero society failed Piper," Aizawa explains, "I don't want to see it fail Midoriya as well. I hoped you'd be the one to understand that feeling best." His eyes fall to his own coffee. "I see so much of Piper in that boy, so much so that I find myself mistaking the two of them sometimes."

Naomasa eyes him cautiously. "Why are you telling me this?"

“Because,” Aizawa looks up at him, his gaze steady and unwavering. “I want to make him a hero. Do you think he can do it?”

Chapter End Notes

So it's officially been three years since I first started writing Piper and so much had happened since then. I met my best friends and started a discord server that I fell in love with, Piper surpassed 250k words and we’ve almost hit half a million reads! I love all of you so much, I never expected all the support that you guys have given me over the years but I'm so so thankful for it. I hope you all will continue to enjoy what's left of my journey with Piper, I know I’m excited for it so I hope everyone else will be as well :) Until next time!

Asterism

Chapter Summary

> In the wake of Iida's death, Midoriya has finally confessed to his time as a vigilante to his therapist: none other than Oboro Shirakumo who swears not to tell a soul.
> In the days following, after our trio has returned to school, Izuku is confronted with what he'd hoped to escape upon leaving Aldera and is finally able to see just how strict UA's policy towards bullying is.
>
> And, in the days prior to their return Aizawa pulls Naomasa aside, finally asking the question he'd had following Stain's capture. “I want to make him a hero. Do you think he can do it?”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

FANART!!!!

szareyzelek x

AveryArts13

Dippy

fretful-ferret x x x x x

yabee-tea x x x x x x x x x x

taztaztaz-blog x x x

bigdumbburd

The discord's Garticphone games :) x x

Aizawa sits at the edge of the couch, staring at something out the window. “Midoriya Izuku, he’s one of your students, right?” he asks, eyes flicking towards Hisashi.

Hisashi stands at the kitchen counter, chopping vegetables for dinner later tonight. He looks up, solemnly meeting the man’s gaze. “He is.”

“He knows how to fight.”

Mic brushes the cutting board off, raking everything into a pan. “He does.”

“He’s reckless.”

Mic can tell where this conversation’s going even before Aizawa has a chance to say it. A contemplative silence stretches between them. “...You could fix that.”

Aizawa looks up at him, expression carefully blank. “I could.”

“He’s a good kid. But, he’s been through a lot.”

“I’m aware,” Aizawa murmurs softly.

Mic sets his knife down, resting his hands against the counter. He takes a breath, head hanging. “But, you’re not. Which is why I’m telling you this. Even before,” there’s a short, pained pause, “young Iida’s death… He was already fighting battles that the two of us aren’t aware of. Kids haven’t changed much since we were in school,” Mic reminds him. He sighs, pushing himself away from the counter. He kicks the stovetop on, pan warming as the butter and vegetables begin to sizzle.

There’s a soft padding of feet from the hall behind them. Oboro peeks his head into the living room. He looks tired, finally finished sifting through the papers he’d brought home. “What’re we talking about?”

A quiet laugh bubbles out of Mic’s mouth as he busies himself with the food. It’s a good distraction. “He’s trying to steal one of my students again,” the words are teasing, but there’s a somber note to them.

“It seems you’re turning this into a habit,” Oboro chuckles, settling down on the couch beside Aizawa. “Which one is it this time?” He leans his head against the man’s shoulder, doing what he can to soften the mood.

Shouta’s chest rumbles beneath him. “Midoriya Izuku.”

Oboro goes quiet. He doesn’t tense, but his sudden silence is surely noticeable. He does his best to play it off as the contemplative kind. “The one who,” he trails off, “with Stain?”

Aizawa makes a small noise of agreement.

Oboro bites gently at the inside of his cheek, settling further into Shouta's shoulder.

Oboro Shirakumo has a duty to protect Midoriya Izuku's secret with his life. Oboro hadn't written a word of what Midoriya had said down, hadn't so much as breathed the name Piper since he'd been told.

Midoriya Izuku was a boy that believed in people on principle. He saw the good in others where some would not. He trusted easily, but rarely wholly. It hurt to see the impact of Piper's death on his husbands' lives. But, what trust he had earned from the boy, he would not betray it, not even for the sake of his husbands'.

They would heal with time, but should Midoriya's trust be broken, Oboro is sure that the boy never would. He would go into hiding, disappear from the world as Midoriya Izuku and return as a vigilante, fighting until the day he died. Alone and lost and too scared to get close to anyone else, whether for their sake or his own.

Oboro had never been much of a storyteller, but he refuses to let such an ending find the boy named Midoriya Izuku.

"I pick Midoriya!"

A few cheers go up to the left side of the gym as Izuku steps towards his new team. "Let's go!"

Aizawa is watching over them today. He stands on the sidelines, eyes wandering over the class as they split themselves into groups of two for whatever game he's decided for them. They land on him, lingering for a moment before moving on.

Izuku feels a nervous prickle at the back of his neck. Aizawa's attention was never the good kind.

On the other side of the gym, there's a low groan. "I told you you should've picked him before me!"

"What do you mean 'told me'," the team captain whines, "all you did was wink at me!"

"Exactly!"

Izuku chokes back a laugh at the exchange, moving towards the back

of his group.

Aizawa's eyes find him frequently throughout their games of dodgeball, always the same short, lingering glances as before. Watching him as Izuku breezily dodges throws, watching as he catches a ball from Shinsou with a cheeky grin.

Izuku really should've seen it coming.

"Midoriya."

It's after class. He and Shinsou are the only students still left in the gym, waiting for the others to clear out so they could reunite. Izuku does not so much as pause in his stride, pretending not to hear the hero. He continues walking with Shinsou. He gives Izuku a look but plays along without a word. They're just a few steps away from the door when Aizawa calls out again.

" *Midoriya Izuku* ." It's not a shout by any means, but in the open space of the gym it seems to boom through the room.

Izuku's words die in his throat and he turns to look at the man. He dons an innocent yet curious expression, praying that it hides the anxiety in his eyes. "Yes sir?"

"I'd like to speak with you after school if you have the time."

Izuku feels universes collapse in his chest. He swallows around the lump in his throat. "Of course."

Aizawa's head bobs in a brief nod of acknowledgment. "You can come find me in the faculty office after your last class. It shouldn't take too long."

Izuku has decided that Aizawa is a liar. He's being led into a trap. This is the only possibility his brain allows him. Aizawa knows he's Piper, knows he's at fault for both Stain's appearance in Musutafu and his uncharacteristic attack on Detective Tsukauchi. An attack that killed Iida Tenya.

Maybe Stain had told someone Piper was not dead. Maybe Shinsou had let his suspicions about Izuku slip while training. Maybe his DNA had finally been cross analyzed with Piper's after his fight with Stain. Maybe Izuku had left one too many puzzle pieces. Maybe Aizawa had

come to the conclusion himself.

Shinsou watches him from the corner of his eye. “What was that about?”

It’s just him and Shinsou today, Reo busy working on something in the support lab.

“I don’t know,” Izuku states honestly. He picks at his food, moving it aimlessly around his plate.

“No,” Shinsou starts, “Why did you pretend you couldn’t hear him?”

“I just…” He sets his chopsticks aside. “Every time I see him I think of Iida,” his words are lost to all but Shinsou in the ambient roar of the cafeteria. This is only one of many reasons for him to avoid the hero.

Every time he sees the hero he’s reminded of his failure, haunted by the thought of Iida’s death and those that mourn for him. The family, the friends that would be left behind.

“I’m sure,” Shinsou starts softly, “That it’s the same for him.”

Izuku hopes that’s the only person he sees.

The door to the faculty room is already open. Izuku pauses just outside. He can see Aizawa hunched over his desk, flipping through papers. He takes a deep breath, steadying himself before knocking softly on the door frame.

Aizawa doesn’t look up. “Come in.”

Izuku steps forward cautiously.

The hero’s eyes flicker up. “Midoriya,” he sounds tired, more so than usual.

After calming down, Izuku had managed to come up with several reasons as to why Aizawa might want to see him. It could be about his abysmal lack of participation during p.e since the start of the year, or he could be checking in on his condition after the Stain incident. Maybe all he wants is to personally ask Izuku a few more questions about what happened before he and Mic arrived the night of Iida’s

death.

But, before the news of Piper's death had spread, the man in front of him had been suspicious of Izuku's connection with Piper. He'd seen the similarities in the way they fought, and now that he's seen Izuku fight up close. No matter how many scenarios Izuku forces himself to imagine, he can't let go of the fear he has at Aizawa's suspicions being rekindled.

Stain already knew and Shinsou was suspicious and he'd confessed everything to his therapist just several days prior. He misses a beat, *what if he told someone?*

The hero pushes himself up from his desk. "Let's find a conference room to talk in."

Izuku follows behind him without a word, anxiety rising. Reo will worry when he finds Shinsou alone. And when he asks Shinsou will tell him where he is, tell him *who he's with.* Aizawa Shouta, *Eraserhead.*

They enter a room across the hall. It's small, quiet, windowless and decorated with two small couches that sit opposite each other with only a coffee table to separate them. Aizawa takes a seat on one, Izuku on the other.

The man Izuku is currently faced with is not a teacher to him in this moment, but a hero. A *threat* . Eraserhead was the most dangerous hero he'd had the pleasure of encountering during his vigilante career. Not because of his quirk or skill, but because he was one of the few people to have encountered both the vigilante called Pied Piper and the boy named Midoriya Izuku.

"I'll get to the point," Aizawa starts. Izuku can feel the universe crashing down, suffocating him. It makes it hard to breathe, but he forces himself to keep steady. He stares at the man so intensely that his vision begins to tunnel, turning to static at the edges. Surely this would be the great reveal.

Aizawa's mouth parts, words dangling from the tip of his tongue.

Izuku hangs onto the action, fear reaching a deafening crescendo.

"I want to train you."

The universe grinds to a halt.

The black hole falls silent.

The sun turns its blazing eye on the hero.

Everything tilts on axis. Expectations crumbling beneath the shift of his paradigm. Izuku blinks at him. “What?”

“You originally applied for the hero course,” Aizawa states bluntly, “You’ve missed a lot from the start of the semester.” His arms cross in front of his chest. “If you want to catch up with the other students you’ll need the extra training.”

Izuku feels tears building unbidden like the rising of the tide, swayed by the gravity of celestial bodies.

“For the time being,” Aizawa starts again, “You’ll still be enrolled in class 1-C and continue with classes as usual. However, if you show enough promise at the end of the year you’ll be transferred to one of the hero course classes. It’ll be a brutal game of catch-up, but if you’re willing I’ll help you.”

How many years had Izuku been waiting for such words? How many foolish things had he done in pursuit of such recognition?

This was the chance Izuku had been waiting for. Even so, there’s a bitter taste on the back of his tongue. “Is this because of Stain?”

“Is this because of Iida?” goes unsaid, but Aizawa understands even without Izuku having to explain.

“If I said no you wouldn’t believe me, would you?”

“No,” Izuku murmurs hoarsely.

The man sighs, leaning back. “I want to give you the opportunity I should’ve given you from the start.” His eyes bore into Izuku’s. There’s something soft in that gaze, something painful like he’s looking at a ghost rather than Midoriya himself.

Who does he see when he looks at me, Izuku wonders numbly, *Was Shinsou right?*

“I’ll have to think about it.” As much as Izuku wants to deny it in the moment, it’s inevitable that he’ll accept the man’s offer.

After all, this was the opportunity he’d fought for so desperately.

hersh-underscore reblogged **josieeejo**

shadowlogogist:

[Gif 1: *CCTV footage of a woman with a knife quirk. She points her sharpened fingers at a bank teller. Pied Piper, running in from the side, does a flying jump kick into the woman's side, sending her to the floor. The caption reads: "Eat shit!"*]

[Gif 2: *Phone footage of Pied Piper at a hero convention. He stands on stage next to five people wearing cosplays of his vigilante suit. The camera zooms in on him shakily. He wears an unamused expression. There is a second-place ribbon on his chest.*]

[Gif 3: *A bird's eye view shot of vigilante Pied Piper, power stancing atop one of many police cruisers on the street. He points dramatically at a quirked villain further down the street. The caption reads: "Sick 'em boys!"*]

[Gif 4: *Pied Piper, crouched on the sidewalk next to a stray cat. He holds his hand out to the cat who hesitantly sniffs at his glove. There's a short moment before the cat bites down, attacking his hand.*]

[Gif 5: *Professional close up of the vigilante Pied Piper. He glares dramatically towards the camera, seemingly looking at something far off. Eventually the look melts off his face and he turns to the cameraman, scratching embarrassedly at the back of his head. The caption reads, Piper: "Was that good?" Cameraman: "It was perfect! You're a lifesaver, man!" Piper's eyes crinkle with a smile.*]

Samonsa:

Piper really was a light in so many people's lives. He helped more than just the people he saved.

low-main-nooble

BRO 😭😭😭

YabeeYot:

I miss him :(

#:(:(:(#no q we spam like assholes

26,328 notes

Izuku watches his ceiling blankly, blindly tracing the edges of shadows. It's well past midnight, but he can't bring himself to sleep. He pushes himself up, shuffling into the living room and out onto the balcony.

It's raining out, storm clouds blurring the skyline.

Eri was out there, hidden somewhere beneath the city's eye. Sleepless nights like these often bring back memories of her. He'd handed her case off to capable people, but her desperate eyes often haunt his wandering mind.

He leans against the railings. The wind shifts, rain splattering onto the floor beneath his feet. It's cold against his skin, falling against his cheeks, brushing through his hair. He closes his eyes, letting the spray ground him.

It'd still be dangerous. UA hadn't lied in their letter to him. But, he'd have support this time, resources. He could ask for help when he needed it. On the horizon, two antenna lights flash a twin vermillion. One day, when he was ready, when he had the resources and skills to do so, he would be able to protect others like Eri. Where he had failed once he would not fail again.

Aizawa would be able to guarantee a future like this. Midoriya never had any intention of refusing him, just like he'd never had any intention of applying to another school in the wake of UA's rejection letter.

He turns, slipping back inside. The aircon rapidly cools the water on his skin, chilling him further as he trods back to his room. He dries his hair with an old towel, sparing a glance at the time, then the closet.

Reo's probably awake.

Izuku tries to resist the urge, he really does, but he eventually gives in. He pulls his closet open, throwing on a new hoodie and pants. He leaves a small note on his bed, grabs an umbrella from the hall closet, and slips quietly out of the apartment.

It's still raining when he gets to Reo's and it'd eaten through more of his clothes than he'd like. His socks are sopping wet, pant cuffs soaked, even the back of his hoodie is splattered with rain.

The fire escape is wet and cold and with his umbrella out of commission for the climb he looks every part a drowned rat by the

time he gets to the top. It's been a while since he's made a nighttime visit to Reo's apartment. He hadn't sent any texts before setting out so he can only hope the boy is still awake. And sure enough, he can see the boy through the crack in his curtains, hunched over his desk. Izuku does not knock. He watches Reo work, diligent with everything he does, every smoking sizzle of the soldering iron, every twist of wires. Even when the rain picks up, Izuku continues to watch in silence, lost in his head. He doesn't know how long he stands there. It must be only a few minutes, but it's enough for his hands to start going numb.

He blinks away rain from his eyelashes, reaching a shaking hand out to knock on the window. Reo's head perks up at the noise and he swivels his chair to face Izuku. He springs up, throwing the curtains the rest of the way open and ushering him out of the rain.

Water drips from Izuku's eyelashes to the floor, streaming from his bangs and clothes, forming a puddle beneath his feet. He can only offer Reo a guilty look.

"You're soaked." Reo's brow is furrowed with concern as he moves to grab an old towel for Izuku to stand on while he gets a clean one. He comes back with an extra towel, tossing it to him to dry off and wrap up in. He digs out a spare set of clothes before leaving him again, this time so he can change while Reo makes them something warm to drink.

Reo comes back a few minutes later with a warm cup of Izuku's favorite tea and a third towel that he drapes over Izuku's head.

Izuku takes a seat on the bed, accepting the cup from Reo as he crawls in behind him.

They sit in silence for a while like that, Izuku drinking his tea and Reo doing what he can to towel dry Izuku's hair.

"What were you working on?" Izuku asks, eyeing Reo's desk.

"A project for school. It's not due for another week, but I didn't feel like sleeping."

"Me neither," Izuku replies softly over the rim of his cup, taking another small sip.

There's another bout of silence, rain pattering against the window. "What did Eraserhead want to talk to you about?"

Izuku hesitates for only a moment. “He asked to train me.”

Reo’s hands still in his hair, the towel falling in a curtain over Izuku’s eyes. “What’d you say?”

“I told him I’d think about it.”

Reo’s head falls against Izuku’s back, resting there. It warms him up, just a little bit. Even with the tea and the dry clothes, he’s *cold* . There’s a sigh. “I’m proud of you.”

Izuku’s head turns a fraction. “You’re not worried?”

“I am,” Reo murmurs, burying his face further against Izuku's back. “But, you were made for saving people, Izuku. You were made for *heroism* . Anyone would be a fool not to see it.” He lifts his head, bumping it back into Izuku. “Even if there’s no one else, I will be there to tell you you can. I’ll be the last one to dissuade you from following your dreams.”

“What if my dream was to become a dog?” Izuku asks, a teasing lilt to his voice

Reo snorts. “I guess I’d have to help make your fursuit.”

Izuku laughs at that, bright and joyful. “When did I say anything about furries!”

“Come on,” Reo teases, reaching around to take Izuku's empty cup and set it aside, “it’d be one more thing you have in common with my uncle.”

“WHAT,” Izuku exclaims, turning to look back at Reo with wide eyes. “What does that mean!”

Reo bursts into laughter at the look on his face, trying to shush him with a wild wave of his hand while he chokes back his laugh. “It’s a joke! It’s a joke!” As a last resort he cups a hand to Izuku’s mouth. “He started dating someone with a cat quirk and he was teasing my uncle about being a furry now.”

Izuku bites at his palm and Reo pulls his hand back with an indignant squawk.

They fall back in a tangle of limbs, batting at one another, poking and prodding with laughter too loud for how late it is. They tire

themselves out eventually, shoulder to shoulder on a bed far too small for the both of them.

There's a lull where only the sound of their breathing breaches the silence. Then, with a breathy exhale, Reo says, "You're my best friend, you know?"

Izuku laughs softly. "Maybe it's because I've never had friends before, but that doesn't really fit us, does it?"

"What, best friends?" Reo asks.

"Mhm," Izuku hums gently, staring up at the ceiling. "I'm good friends with Shinsou too but… I don't know. It doesn't feel the same."

Reo's head lulls to the side, looking at him. "Something different then?"

"Something different," Izuku confirms. "Nothing romantic," he murmurs, rolling onto his side to watch for Reo's reaction, "but something other than just friends, I guess." Amber meets emerald in a swirl of colliding galaxies

"Do you have a word for it?"

"Not really."

"Do you want to have a word for it?"

"Do we need one?" Izuku asks curiously.

Reo huffs a gentle laugh, looking back towards the ceiling. "Not really."

"I love you," Izuku whispers.

A content smile settles on Reo's lips. His eyes fall closed. "I love you too."

Midoriya slides quietly out of bed, careful not to wake Reo as he slips out of his arms. If he has any intention of accepting Aizawa's offer tomorrow he'll need his uniform.

Chapter End Notes

HAPPY NEW YEARS EVERYONE!!!
I SAID IT IN THE DISCORD AND I'LL SAY IT HERE TOO.
CHAPTER 60 IS FOR THE GAYS!!!
It's been a long time coming but dadzawa is here and qpr midoreo is canon!!!
I honestly meant to post this yesterday but forgot to work on it at all askdfjhdsf even now it's only been half-assed in the proofreading department lmao I'm sad I missed a December upload but I was honestly just so burnt out from NaNoWriMo 😮‍💨😮‍💨 BUT IT'S DONE IT'S HERE! NEW YEAR NEW ME NEW PIPER CONTENT!!!!

It's been a long year, but you guys have really helped make all of this work worth it. I'll never be able to thank you enough for your support, whether you're a ghost reader or commenter or an artist, thank you all, I hope everyone has an amazing year, let's make the best of it :)

Waxing Gibbous

Chapter Summary

In the wake of Aizawa's talk with Mic and Oboro, the hero finally asks Izuku the question he'd been longing to hear since he turned four. But Iida's death is still fresh in everyone's minds and Izuku finds himself hesitating to accept Aizawa's offer.
After a long night spent in contemplation and a heartfelt conversation with Reo what he needs to do becomes all the more clear.
Heroism was dangerous work, but in the end, there's only one answer Izuku can give Aizawa.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Art!!!

fretful-ferret x x x x x x x x x

sorrel x x

vsversus x

taztaztaz-blog x

lmaothisusernamesucks

squishyswimmer

definitely-maybe-not-a-cryptid

yabee-tea

Pied Piper Podfic by Sobreezy x !!!!!

“What do you mean you’re closing the case?”

“I mean we’re closing it,” Detective Nakajima sighs over the phone. “It’s been a month. The case has gone cold. It’s been cold since that kid first disappeared. It won’t be official till it’s been a year, but I

won't be assigning anyone else his case unless we get another lead."

Naomasa clenches his jaw, saying nothing.

"We cross-referenced his DNA with every database we have access to. There was nothing, Tsukauchi. You have to let it *go* . You know as well as I that cases like these happen all the time. We've got files upon files of cold cases: thefts, abductions, murders. I wish we could spend more time on cases like these, but it's just not feasible. There's bigger things to deal with than getting justice for someone who isn't even here to ask for it. It's best to cut it off now while everyone's eyes are still on Stain."

Naomasa tenses.

There's a brief pause, a flustered cough. "I apologize," Nakajima murmurs before quickly moving on. "This was only a courtesy call, Tsukauchi; from one detective to another. I thought you should know."

"Thank you," the words leave his lips unbidden, nothing more than an automated response. He doesn't feel thankful. Piper's killer was still out there and no one but him seemed to care. They were ready to let them get away with it. Naomasa bites gently at his cheek, bowing his head. There's nothing he can do once they close the case, unofficially or not.

He sits there for a moment as they hang up, phone clenched in his fist. The little girl Piper had found. *Eri* . Arguably one of the only people to have seen Piper out of uniform. It'd been a while since he'd talked with Nighteye about the case. Where was *she* ? *How* was she?

Piper's final wish had been to save her. Had she been there all this time?

Naomasa is aware there'd been one more raid since the first, just as small and yielding similar results: a few criminals, but no little girl.

He worries at his lower lip, staring down mournfully at his phone. Piper was dead, they were archiving his case, but there were more people that needed saving; that's what the vigilante had told him in his final letter. What had he been doing all this time? In the month following Piper's death all he'd done was get run through by Stain, had done nothing as yet another child died within arms reach.

He hunches in on himself, closing his eyes and letting out a trembling

breath. There were more people to save, Piper was the one that told him not to get wrapped up in his case.

Naomasa opens his eyes again, grip tightening around his phone with a new shaky determination.

He calls the one person he knows will be able to help him achieve Piper's final wish. The phone rings once, twice.

"Hello! This is the Nighteye Agency, you're speaking with Bubble Girl, how can I help you?"

Naomasa takes a breath. "This is Detective Tsukauchi Naomasa with the Musutafu Police Department. I need to talk with Nighteye."

r/piedpiper · Posted by u/glgkgbL five hours ago

Piper's Case is being Closed

1.6k upvotes

The police have started to pre-close Piper's case and here's the proof. Pied Piper has been a pain in the sides of both heroes and police for a while now, but especially so in the side of police. After the discovery of Piper's body at Dagobah there have been little to no updates on his case, neither in relation to his killer(s) nor his civilian identity. It's not unheard of for there to be no leads on a case like this, especially with the growing number of quirks out there. But, if you'll notice the police were only concerned about upkeeping appearances on working on Piper's case up until Stain's appearance in Musutafu where he targeted the previous lead detective for Piper's case (which leaves us with a whole other bag of worms to unpack)

For a bit of a precursor, I'm friendly with a lot of people in the Musutafu police department (this is the department leading Piper's case), because of this I'm usually privy to more information than the average person when it comes to cases like these.

So, some of the things I'm going to talk about aren't really public information. To start I'm going to talk about the original lead detective for Piper's case. About a month ago, following Piper's death, he was pulled from the case. Now I've talked with several people about why this happened, some claimed it was a move from the higher-ups, others said he willingly handed the position off to someone else, but what we do know for certain is that he took a leave

of absence following this. We also know that as soon as a new lead detective was assigned, Piper's case completely stagnated. At least one person I spoke to mentioned that the new detective wasn't a fan of Piper and wasn't as invested in his case as the last one. Normally this wouldn't be a huge deal, but the fact that we haven't publically heard anything else involving the case after his involvement sends up a bit of a red flag.

At this point in time it's been around a month since Piper's death was confirmed, but we haven't heard anything since the initial statement concerning his death. Officially, an open investigation can't be archived until after a year has passed, but unofficially there are a lot of cases that police/heroes will 'close', meaning they'll still have people officially assigned to the case, but they won't have anyone actively investigating it. Usually this is due to a lack of new leads, but the fact that the police have a body, that they have complete DNA of Piper and /still/ can't find any information on who this guy was??? (Like forgetting his killers for a moment. How do you have a whole body and no way to identify it???? It's just suspicious.)

Piper's killer(s) are still on the loose, but the police have already given up on trying to find them. I know some people still think his death was an accident and that he'd succumbed to the injuries he'd gotten during the USJ attack, but bodies don't just wash up on shore by themselves like that

My only guess in all of this is that they've unofficially closed Piper's case, there's just too many overlapping coincidences for that not to be the case and it PISSES ME OFF because yeah this dude was breaking the law but he was SAVING PEOPLE ya know?? idc how much you hated the guy he deserves justice, his killers deserve punishment but if they close the case like this they'll get away with it, they'll do it to someone else, I hope Piper's haunting their asses

tldr: Pipers murder case is being unofficially closed, there's been no progress on the investigation around his civilization identity even with a body and there's been no progress identifying his killer(s) either, the original detective was removed from the case and the new one doesn't like Piper which leads me to believe that they've prematurely archived Piper's case (sorry I'm bad at summarizing stuff)

.

endobeo 2.5k points · three hours ago

after reading this there's no way the police aren't using Stain's case to pull attention away from the fact that no one ever found out what happened to Piper

.

obwiisily 369 points · two hours ago

if those theories about the hero commission being involved are true it'd make even more sense as to why they're closing the case so early

.

clo_clo 1.1k points · four hours ago

Can you make a post talking about the thing with the old detective and Stain?? I haven't seen anyone else talk about it

.

S4Wmau 6.9k points · two hours ago

op ik you mentioned the original detective, but?? i don't see how they're relevant in all this???

.

glgkgbL 1.1k points · now

I've talked with the original detective a few times in passing, he's always been a really nice guy, I didn't mention it in the main post because I wanted to be respectful to anything he might be going through but I've had a few people tell me the reason he took a leave of absence was because he was mourning for Piper, even though he was supposed to be catching him I think they'd become friends of sorts, at the very least ik Piper had given him info on a case and that they were in pretty good terms with one another

.

skissorpNda9 34 points · two hours ago

bro literally no one asked

.

ficklFERRET 963 points · one hour ago

Is it legal for you to be telling us all this? I MEAN IM NOT GONNA COMPLAIN DHNSGSJSGS I just don't want you catching any charges for this, stay safe homie

.

oopenoo 2k points · now

piper's death about to become the internets next cold case obsession

Midoriya stands anxiously outside the faculty room. Students slip by behind him, idle chatter serving as white noise to the rumbling thud of his heart. His stomach twists uncomfortably.

His grip tightens around the strap of his bag.

He goes over the words in his head, repeating his opening line like a mantra. He takes a breath. Izuku knocks, sliding the door open without waiting for a response before he's able to psyche himself out. He spots Aizawa sitting on the far side of the room, grading a few last-minute papers before class starts.

There's a few other teachers in the room, a couple of which spare him glances, but ultimately leave him be when he sets his sights on Aizawa. He treads quietly across the room, pausing beside the man's spot.

Aizawa looks up from his desk.

Izuku's entire speech goes out the window. His stomach flips but his determination does not waver. He hardens his resolve. "I'll do it."

Just the day before, Aizawa had sat across from him staring at the ghost of someone else in Izuku's place. Now, the hero watches him quietly, the barest hints of a smile pulling at the corner of his mouth. The ghost that had sat in Izuku's place seems to be gone for now. "Once class lets out, head over to gym beta with Shinsou. He'll know where to go."

Shinsou raises his brow at Izuku as he slips into class. He flops down in his seat, already feeling impossibly drained. "I didn't think you'd make it."

Izuku closes his eyes with a breathy laugh. "Had to talk to Aizawa

before class started."

Izuku misses the knowing smile that slips onto Shinsou's face. "What for? You never told me what he wanted yesterday."

"He…" Izuku trails off, steadying himself. "He wants to train me," Izuku offers quietly. "We're supposed to meet him at gym beta after school," he continues awkwardly, cracking open an eye to gauge the other boy's response only to find a lazy smile on Shinsou's lips. "What?"

"We're gonna do it," Shinsou says simply, leaning back in his seat, "The two of us. We'll be heroes."

Izuku feels something bright flutter in his chest. It's not fiery or fierce like a burning sun, but soft, glowing with the light of a thousand distant stars. All of his uncertainty is forgotten in the moment, able to finally rejoice in the knowledge that the moment Izuku had been waiting for since the age of four was finally coming to fruition. That all of his effort up until now was not in vain and that his dreams that he'd so painfully given up on are now back within his reach. Piper's death was not the end he had been so scared it would be, but a new beginning. Like a phoenix in fire, like Mercury in retrograde, it's come back.

A smile pulls at Izuku's lips, bright and shining. "Yeah."

This was only the beginning of his journey, a prologue just as important as its upcoming chapters.

Midoriya Izuku *will* become a hero. He *will* continue to save people.

"Should we start our own hero agency?" Shinsou asks suddenly with a smirk. He leans forward, resting his chin against his palm.

"You think Reo will agree to sign an exclusivity agreement to make gear for us?"

Shinsou hums, pretending to be lost in thought. "If he says no we can always blackmail him."

"I think he'd end up sabotaging our gear if we did that: hidden wheels in our boot heels, glitter in our smoke bombs," Izuku lists with a quiet snort as Present Mic walks in, greeting the class with a smile and signaling the start of class.

At lunch, Reo joins them and they indoctrinate him into their far away plans of their own hero agency. “See, you graduate before us so you can do whatever you want, make a name for yourself! *But* , once Shinsou and I become independent heroes, right? You join us!”

“I would like to add that this was my plan to begin with,” Shinsou butts in with a playful smirk, “Just in case you were worried about our future being spearheaded by the guy who doesn’t wash his rice.”

Reo chokes at the news, eyes widening as he quickly turns to look at Izuku.

Izuku gawks at Shinsou, face cycling through the five stages of grief at the sudden betrayal. “You snitch! That was an accident and you know it!”

“You don’t wash your rice?!” Reo shouts around the food in his mouth.

“I do! I swear I do! It was just the once!” Izuku pleads, fervently looking between the two of them. “I was just tired, I wasn't thinking about it!” Izuku feels his laugh die in his throat, eyes flickering to the end of their table as someone passes. It’s a 1-A student, Hagakure, one of Iida’s classmates. He hadn’t seen her since the sports festival.

A deep ache settles in his chest, painful and tight. He falls silent with a distressed furrow of his brow.

He can’t see the look on Hagakure’s face but he can hazard a guess on what it might be based on those behind her. Mourning still, but doing what they can to hide it behind idle chatter, burying it until they forget it hurts. The same thing Izuku was doing.

“What should we…” Izuku trails off slowly, trying to recover himself as the group disappears further into the lunchroom, “name it.”

“Our hero agency?” Shinsou asks. He follows Izuku’s line of sight, sharing a look with Reo. “Shindorchi hero agency.”

The suggestion does what it’s intended to do, grabbing Izuku's attention with the efficiency of a firing gun. His face twists with a playful grimace. “That’s just a ship name and you know it.”

Reo lets out a startled snort at his reaction.

A lazy grin splits Shinsou's face. "What about Hitrezuku, then?"

"Why am I at the end now!" Izuku shouts with a laugh.

"Because you're being mean to him, Izuku," Reo scolds.

Shinsou's lips pull into an amused smile. "You've insulted both of my long thought out names to my face. I spent so much time trying to come up with a name that you'd like only for this to happen."

"This is bullying!" Izuku splutters, looking animatedly between the two of them.

"You're right," Reo says, shaking his head with a disappointed sigh. "I can't believe you would bully one of your classmates like this, Izuku."

Izuku groans, giving up and banging his head against the table with a rattle of his lunch tray.

"I think he's trying to play the victim."

Izuku raises his head just a hair, giving Shinsou a half-hearted scowl that the other boy can't help but laugh at. They would be heroes, the two of them, and with Reo's gear on their shoulders, they'll be unstoppable.

Reo huffs a gentle laugh, propping himself up with a hand beneath his chin as he leans forward. "I love how you guys are trying to come up with agency names before you even have hero ones by the way."

Izuku flushes. "I wasn't the one who started brainstorming ship names!"

The rest of the day comes and goes quickly, leaving Izuku little time for the anxiety in his chest to overwhelm him. He'd fought in front of Aizawa before without clueing the man into his origins, but really it was a different thing entirely to be trained by him up close and personal. Piper was dead and Izuku really didn't want to give him anything else that pointed to otherwise. Shinsou leads them to a locker room where they switch into their p.e. uniforms before making the trek out to gym beta.

Aizawa's waiting for them when they get there. He offers them a curt nod as they enter, immediately launching into what they'll be doing.

“Shinsou, you’ll work alone for now. Keep practicing with the capture weapon, I left it over on the bench for you. You’ll run through the same things as last time. Midoriya,” he states, moving to address him, “we’ll be doing a skills assessment today. I've already reviewed your performance during the sports festival, but I’d like to see what you can do up close.”

Izuku knows as well as Aizawa does that he’d already seen what Izuku can do. He’d seen the wild ferocity of a mourning fifteen-year-old, had seen the dangerous glint of a bo staff in the hands of someone who *knew* what it could do. In the wake of Iida’s death, Aizawa was the last one remaining by Izuku’s side. He fights back the memories of that night, clamping down on them to keep himself together. This will be his first fight since their encounter with Stain, maybe it’s even Aizawa’s first as well.

Izuku nods, apprehension pooling in his gut.

Izuku ties his hair back, keen on keeping the longest strands from falling in his face. He shakes out his limbs, carefully eyeing the hero across from him. Aizawa too works absently at pulling his hair back, he gives a few instructions to Shinsou as his friend prepares for his own training on the other side of the gym. Aizawa gaze flickers back to the Izuku.

“We’ll spar until I say stop, don’t hold back.”

Izuku hasn’t so much as fought Aizawa before as he has *fled* from him. He’d used every trick in the book to get away from the man the first few times they met as vigilante and hero. Now there was no running. Heroes didn’t run from fights, *couldn’t* .

Anxiety flutters in his chest as they take their places.

Aizawa rushes towards him without warning. He throws a punch that Izuku slips past. He drops low out of the way, sweeping his leg out to try and unbalance the hero, refusing to be forced on the defensive so soon. Izuku’s anxiety dissolves in one fell swoop, attention refocusing on the fight. This was easy. This was something he’d done hundreds of times before. This was familiar, comforting in a strange way.

Izuku likes to think he holds his own against the man, but by the end of their sparring match he’s just glad Piper never had to do more than run from him. Izuku’s sure now, panting and out of breath, if he had he’d have never even gotten the chance to kill Piper.

Izuku stands, hands on his hips, as he tries to control his breathing. Aizawa tosses him a bottle of water that Izuku easily catches, greedily accepting it.

“During the sports festival,” Aizawa starts, arms crossed over his chest, every bit as composed as he had been at the start of their fight, “you fought with a bo staff Yaoyorozu created. Where did you learn to use it?”

Izuku pauses, buying time with another sip of water. That hadn’t been the last time he’d seen Izuku with a bo staff in hand. “My martial arts instructor taught a secondary class on it. She asked me to join it when I was around twelve. I’ve been going since then.”

Aizawa nods absently. “You fight well, better than a majority of my students in hand to hand,” the hero takes a moment, thinking over his next words, “I’ll be honest,” he states plainly, “When I first met you all I saw was your quirklessness.”

The words sting, like salt in a wound that’s never quite healed, but he doesn’t recoil from them. He stands firm, takes another sip of water, cautiously eyeing the hero.

“But, people can only be seen as lacking when they’re compared to others. I let my biases overwrite the talent I saw in you... I want to apologize for that. Quirks have never been a requirement for heroism and you have the skills to prove that to anyone who thinks otherwise, myself included.” He meets Izuku’s eyes. “There will always be a difference in abilities between heroes and villains. Sometimes that advantage leans towards our side, other times it doesn't. No two heroes are the same, they have different strengths, different weaknesses. I won’t lie and say that I can make you a hero the likes of All Might. *But* , I can make you *a* hero if you’re willing to let me help you.”

Izuku takes a breath, preparing himself. “When people see me fight they see someone *strong* , someone suited for heroism, for saving people…” he starts, “But, I know, I *know* , that once they learn that I’m quirkless, all of that changes.” There’s a twinge in his chest, something uncomfortable and angry that he holds in, burying deep for the moment. They’re far away enough that Shinsou can’t hear them, even so, Izuku keeps his voice low, even. “I’m well aware of the discrimination, even the unintentional or well-meaning kind. I’ve seen the pity, seen the disgust. I’ve seen how they coddle, how they *destroy* ,” Izuku tells him softly, face twisted with a grimace, “There’s not

many people who apologize, who *learn* from things like that." It's not acceptance, or forgiveness, only acknowledgment.

Midoriya Izuku has all the makings of a hero. Even in the face of death he had not shied from his fight against Stain. He had not wavered in his resolve to protect those behind him. But, he was reckless, rushing into danger without a thought of his own safety.

The USJ was blurry to him, but Aizawa remembers Piper rushing towards him with the same reckless abandon that Midoriya had taken Stain's blade with. Hizashi had seen it as well, their similarities. Aizawa doesn't want to admit that part of the reason he decided to train Midoriya was because of how much he reminded him of Piper, but it was a truth he couldn't avoid. There are times where he forgets the two aren't one and the same; where he thinks of Midoriya, but really it's Piper on his mind.

"My answer from the morning hasn't changed," Midoriya tells him with a small smile, "Saving people is the only thing I can do."

For a moment it's Piper standing before him. *"I just want to save people."* Aizawa dispels the memory, grounding himself back in the moment. The boy's eyes meet his. They are viridescent, steady, determined. They are the closest thing Aizawa thinks he'll ever see to Piper's eyes again. He nods at the boy. "Then let's get started."

ray @ midterms

@mcpanics

okay but hear me out, what if Piper faked his death 👀

2:14 AM · 5/25/32 · Twitter Web App

9 Retweets **62** Quote Tweets **21** Likes

Cam @shush3r · 1h

Replying to @**mcpanics**

nah this kinda low key disrespectful tho

@crowvader · 2h

Replying to @**mcpanics**

MAAM??? THEY LITERALLY FOUND

HIS BODY WHAT MORE EVIDENCE

DO YOU NEED????

breezy @sobreezy · 1h

Replying to @**mcpanics**

girl those piper stans eating you ALIVE in those

qrts

Airo @_mossnorange · 1h

Replying to @**mcpanics**

I know this was probably a joke but it really

missed the mark,,, Pied Piper gave a lot to

the people in Musutafu who often went

overlooked for someone to say all of it was

essentially fake

[%^*] @g1tch3d_feline · 1h

Replying to @**mcpanics**

okay but □

UPDATE SOON @two22twenty · 1h

Replying to @**mcpanics**

NOT THE RATIO ON THE QRTS DGDGFSGG

Chapter End Notes

IT'S TWODAYS THE GREATEST TUESDAY THERE IS THERE'S NO WAY I COULD MISS UPDATING ON TWODAYS, in other news Im so tired, i kept falling asleep while trying to edit this so if there's any errors take the L ig

There's a link to it at the beginning of the chapter, but in case anyone missed it Piper has its very own podfic now thanks to Sobreezy! The first chapter is out now so go check it out if you have the time it's really amazing!!

Thank you all for reading! I hope you all enjoyed it :) Piper's case is being closed but there's still so many people that can't seem to get them off their minds. Naomasa is slowly recovering, focus finally shifting to something other than Piper, even if it's not such a far jump to make. Izuku finally starts his training arc and things are looking up for him more than they ever have before.

NOW, I'm going to sleep! HAPPY TWOSDAY! Until next time!!!

Aerglo

Chapter Summary

> With Piper's case unofficially closed and Izuku starting his training under Aizawa, we begin our final trek to the end of this story.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart!!

fretful-ferret x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x

sorrel x x x x x x x x

dippydraws

szaryzelek

the-pale-ones

kitty

yabee_tea

Izuku feigns right, dodging left around Aizawa's side. He swings his staff at the man's legs, aiming to knock him off balance only to be forced back by an elbow. "You already know how to fight," Aizawa says, countering Izuku's next attack. "But, having an extra power to rely on isn't a luxury that you have. This is why you have to learn how to use everything to your advantage."

Izuku falls back, retreating when the hero's capture weapon whips out towards him. He disappears into the maze of large shelving units. It'll be harder for Aizawa to effectively use his scarf here. They're in one of UA's custom training centers, an enclosed space modeled after the inside of a warehouse. Izuku's had more than a few fights in places like these, jam-packed with floor-to-ceiling shelves filled with a random assortment of crates and miscellaneous items. It forces you close-quarters— limits your movements when you're fighting between isles.

“I saw hints of it at the sports festival,” Aizawa calls; his voice echoes down the isles, ”You used the environment to benefit, used your opponents' quirks— their weaknesses— against them.”

Izuku, in truth, has fought freely against hundreds of quirked individuals. Using his environment? Others’ weaknesses? That was something he’d had to learn the hard way, with adrenaline flooding his system and murderous intent in the air. Izuku pretends he’s grasping at the idea, acting like he doesn’t quite *get* it, like it had been something that came to him naturally.

Izuku clicks his staff into the new holster on his back, stilling. He listens for the sound of Aizawa’s footsteps; hearing them he takes his chance, climbing a good way up the industrial shelving unit. He clings to the side— waits with bated breath as Aizawa approaches the side opposite him. Then, with one swift movement, he swings his legs back and kicks them forward, slamming his shoes into one of the shelf’s crates and sending it toppling out the other side towards Aizawa.

The hero leaps back, head snapping up towards where it’d come from. His capture weapon chases Izuku’s afterimage.

Izuku climbs higher up the shelves, refusing to look down even as one of his feet slips with a resounding clang. There’s a swish of rustling fabric as Aizawa sends out his capture weapon again, using it to haul himself up after the boy.

There’s more room towards the upper shelves, enough so that he’s able to stand without crouching. He shoves everything he can off the shelf, impeding Aizawa’s climb up but also giving his position away. Soon enough the hero’s joining him at the top; Izuku’s ready for him.

Or at least he *thinks* he is. Even if there’s room enough to stand here it’s still an enclosed space. There’s no room to swing his staff, barely enough to move let alone fight now that there’s two of them. Aizawa makes the first move, sending his capture weapon out to restrain him. Izuku slides past it, hand latching onto the scarf. He gives it one good wrap around his hand and pulls with all the force he can muster.

There is, unfortunately, more slack in it than he anticipates. And where he’d meant to unbalance the hero, he only unbalances himself. The step back he takes to right himself slips off the edge.

Before he can even start to topple off the shelf the capture weapon wraps around his midriff, helping him regain his balance.

“It’s always smart to pull your opponent into a situation where they have the disadvantage,” Aizawa informs him, “But, it’s important to remember they have an equal chance of working against you as well. You’re good at quickly spotting your opponents’ weaknesses. But you need to consider *your* strengths right alongside them.”

Izuku pants, a small pool of disappointment settling beneath his throat.

Aizawa must sense his drifting thoughts, pulling him back with a: “You’re getting better. Even with only a few weeks, I can see the difference.” He pats the boy on the shoulder, peeking over the edge of the shelf. “We’ll go again.”

Training with Aizawa is an arduous thing, but it’s necessary for their development as future heroes. Aizawa’s doing his best to cram in as many lessons as he can while remaining thorough with each topic: how to fight, how to defend, how to strategize, how to *save* people in ways beyond defeating the villains stationed in front of them. Despite how hard the work is they still share fragments of peace in the in-between moments.

Izuku laughs, bright and genuine as Aizawa pulls himself up towards the ceiling to help Shinsou untangle himself from his latest attempt at using his own capture weapon. Izuku had declined the hero’s original offer to teach him to use it as well, preferring to stick with his staff, worried that they’d only impede each other. But, if he could learn how to use them in tandem… He dismisses the idea for now, watching Shinsou’s painfully slow detanglement.

Another laugh bursts past his lips when Shinsou falls a few inches with a loud yelp of fear. He’s silently mouthing curses at Izuku from above, flipping him off when he manages to free a hand before he’s back to desperately clinging to the cloth again.

Aizawa murmurs a few straight-faced reassurances to him, but Izuku can see the slight twitch to the man’s lips even from here.

Life is good, Izuku thinks. On his days off from training, he visits the dojo, helping Ji-Woo train the younger students or running through a few rounds of playful sparring with Hirano or Gamon. He’s *happy*. Every Friday after training he meets with Oboro, bone weary but smiling because although it’s slow he’s *healing*. He’s learning to be selfish, just a little bit. He spends what nights he can at Reo’s, slipping

through his window when the nightmares keep him up, crawling into bed next to each other like that last night at the hospital. Life is busy for Izuku, but it's *peaceful*. He's leaving the past behind him, mourning for Piper's loss like any other and then moving *on*. He's scattering the ashes across Musutafu. He will never forget what Piper did, what he saw, who he saved, who he didn't.

He cries. He wipes his tears. And in the end, he'll become stronger for it.

Who was Pied Piper?

#piedpiper #vigilante #conspiracy #news

3,368,847 views · 3 days ago

[Video Transcript: "What if Pied Piper was sitting next to you? Would you be able to tell? 'But, Lilac!' you say 'He's dead! Of course he wouldn't be sitting next to me!' Pied Piper was an individual just like you and me; young too, if the reports are anything to go by. The police announced a news-friendly version of the condition Piper's 'body' was found in. In truth, what they actually found was *gruesome*," he stresses, "But there's something strange about it. It's unidentifiable. Somewhat decayed, face unrecognizable, anything that could link back to Piper's identity was *erased*. And *that's* what they don't tell you in any of the public reports. There's a reason police weren't able to identify the remains and it's not simple incompetence, it's blatant and purposeful erasure of the body's identity. Now there are a few reasons this could be. Number one: pure coincidence, there's no telling how many sick fucks are in the world and maybe one of them just so happened to get ahold of Piper. Or Number two: Piper's civilian identity could lead back to his killers."

"Now, I'll ask again. What if Pied Piper was sitting next to you? Would you know what he looked like? Would you be able to tell?—"]

LilacMinds

509K subscribers

Everyone seems set on accepting the death of Pied Piper— but what if there's more to the story? In this video I explore more of the circumstances behind Piper's death and why the way officials have handled his case has left the public with so many "What if" questions. Pied Piper's civilian identity is currently unknown but

SHOW MORE

Comments 5,249

Mikey did Dou 1 day ago

Great video as always!

Ur Mom38 23 hours ago

AYO NEW VIDEO????

horseshits 2 days ago

Piper content my beloved

LLLLulu 3 days ago

bro u gotta let piper die, im sick of hearing about him already

dippy york 2 days ago

What would you do, if Piper was right in front of you? BAJUU

13IURANGO1398 16 hours ago

personally i agree more with your second statement, i definitely think the state of his body had more to do with the killers' identities than just simple incompetence or violence for the sake of violence though i agree that there are people out there like that. i'm really glad you brought this up though, i haven't seen anyone else bring it up as a possibility for why piper's body was…

Read more

Moris Browns 2 hours ago

Can you go back to making videos that aren't about Piper? His case is just depressing :/

Naomasa reads through the documents, expression set with a slight frown. "The deadline's coming up. You said you already contacted all the heroes you had in mind, right?" He looks up, finding Nighteye still working at his desk. They're currently holed up in the hero's office; Yagi's face smiling brightly at them from several of the walls.

Naomasa pointedly avoids looking at them for too long.

Nighteye glances up at him briefly before continuing his work. "I have a list," he answers, "but I've yet to hear back from some of them. Fatgum and Ryukyu have agreed to bring their current interns along and both Eraserhead and Rocklock sent over confirmation for their participation last night. But, I'm still waiting on word from Snipe and a few others."

Naomasa sets his papers aside, leaning back. "I'll talk with Snipe, get him to agree. He's had encounters with Piper in the past, he may be sympathetic to his cause, especially with a little girl in the mix."

The hero eyes him for another moment but says nothing against it, only nodding.

"We need more people," Naomasa murmurs, "We'll already be outnumbered. We need to at least *look* like we have the advantage, inflate our numbers a bit."

"I'll send out a message, see if anyone has any additional people they can bring. Is everything sorted on your end?"

Nao hums a noise of agreement. "Local police have agreed to assist in the raid and offered a group of 80 some personnel to help, half of which will be fitted in riot gear."

There's a clacking of more computer keys. "We'll have to hope they'll be enough to subdue a majority of the criminals while we handle Overhaul and the others."

"We're gonna do it," Naomasa states, glaring holes into the coffee table, hands folded together in his lap, "We'll do it."

Finals come and go but with the start of summer break their training only continues.

Izuku skids across the floor and groans with a laugh. “I was so close!”

Aizawa peers down at him with an upward twitch of his lips. He offers the boy a hand up from the floor, hauling him back to his feet.

“There’s no ‘close’ in hero work. You either do or don’t,” the hero reminds him, eyes turning to where Shinsou’s hauling himself towards the ceiling with the help of his capture weapon. The boy was getting better at it. His muscles were filling in and it’d been a while since he’d managed to get himself tangled up.

There’s a shift in Izuku’s face when the hero looks away, something dark and pained that flickers in his eyes. White hair flutters in his memories, red eyes bright against a forgotten backdrop.

He’d started to forget her face, Iida’s too.

“We’ll take a break,” Aizawa continues, looking back at him just in time to catch the tail end of Izuku’s expression as he wipes it from his face. It takes a moment for the hero to even register the look and by then it’s being covered with a faux smile from Izuku. “Go get a drink. We’ll spar again in 5 minutes.”

He nods. “Yes sir.”

They continue to practice for another hour, Aizawa splitting his attention between training both him and Shinsou before they wrap it up for the day.

He’s busy locking the gym back up when he gets the call.

Aizawa rubs at his brow. He can feel a headache coming on.

He leans back into the couch with a sigh, letting his eyes fall shut.

Nighteye’s voice echoes in his head: *“I know you’re not usually one to take on sidekicks or interns, but if you have anyone in mind we’re looking for more heads.”*

Oboro takes a seat beside him. “What is it?”

Aizawa glances over at him. “Piper—” he starts, thoughts trailing off.

“Is there a new lead?” Oboro asks softly.

There’s a sigh. “No. I agreed to help Nighteye’s agency wrap up the last case Piper was working on before his death. We’re going to be up against a big organization so they’re calling for more people. Sidekicks and interns included.”

“But, you don’t—” he trails off, “Ah. Midoriya and Shinsou? They’re not technically your interns though,” Oboro says, turning to him, “No one would force you to bring them.”

“They don’t have hero licenses,” Aizawa states, “And even if Shinsou’s quirk could be useful his fighting skills are still lacking,” his words are firm, unyielding. “He wouldn’t be able to defend himself. And Midoriya… even though he’s good at fighting, he’s rash and impulsive,” he reasons. It sounds weak even in his own ears. He pushes on, determined, “he kept throwing himself between Stain and everyone else and—”

Oboro watches him quietly, brows furrowed with gentle concern. “You sound like you’re trying to convince yourself more than me.”

“He’s inexperienced,” the hero tries.

Oboro bites gently at the inside of his cheek. “Is he?”

Aizawa stills beside him and Oboro tenses for a moment, scared he’d said too much. “You said it yourself,” he continues slowly, carefully picking his next words, “he held his own against Stain. Someone with no experience couldn’t do that.”

Aizawa remains quiet. “He doesn’t have a license,” he repeats after a while.

Oboro hums, leaning back. “There are always ways around stuff like that, isn’t there? He’s a gen ed. student, right? So he didn’t get an internship. You can always write it off as a learning experience.”

There’s a long stretch of silence.

Oboro lets him think.

“If he can beat me in a fight,” Aizawa murmurs like an afterthought, “I’ll consider it.” This shouldn’t even be a thought he’s entertaining. This operation would be a dangerous one against some of Japan’s most wanted villains. And here he was, trying to drag an unlicensed

quirkless kid into the middle of it. He shakes the thought off, no, no. Midoriya was capable, more so than some of his 1-A counterparts. *That* was why he was even considering this at all. That's why none of his other students had come to mind when Nighteye called. "I'll suggest it, see what he says."

"You'll suggest it?" Oboro chuckles, "You really think that boy will say no? After all the things you've told me about him?"

Aizawa huffs, amusement seeping past the turmoil that'd been bubbling up in him. He thinks back to the determination in Midoriya's eyes— thinks back to that same breed of determination he'd seen in Piper's eyes. In another life he feels sure that Midoriya would've ended up a vigilante if Aizawa hadn't gotten to him first. In another life maybe he and Piper would've been friends, would've fought alongside each other, protected each other.

Maybe in that life Piper wouldn't be dead.

Izuku's staff blurs as he twirls it between his hands. He runs through a few movements on autopilot, thoughts wandering. Every step is well practiced, near flawless in its execution even while his mind is elsewhere.

Aizawa watches him from a distance, leaning against the gym's door frame. Izuku hasn't noticed him yet.

"You need to work on your situational awareness," Aizawa calls across the room.

Though Izuku startles at his voice, eyes zipping towards the door, he pulls casually out of his next move, staff ever steady. "Aizawa sensei," Izuku greets, twisting at the staff's midpoint and watching as the ends retreat inwards before holstering it on his back. He looks back up at him. "Shinsou had to leave early for an appointment."

Aizawa nods. "He stopped by the office on his way out." He falls quiet for a moment, staring and being stared at in return. "What do you say we spar again today?"

Usually Aizawa's quirk was the great equalizer, erasing a majority of his opponents' abilities in order to level the playing field— though the

term ‘leveling’ is a bit off. His quirk usually left people to flounder without their abilities, leaving them confused, uncertain, especially for those who had never learned how to fight without their quirks.

But then there was Midoriya Izuku. Quirkless. And perhaps it was his quirklessness that was the great equalizer of their fights. He had nothing for Aizawa to erase; he had nothing to be shocked by the loss of and thus any advantage the hero may have had was all but crushed under heel.

They stand in the middle of a department store, another of UA’s many battle sets. They each take three steps back and the fight begins. Aizawa sends out his capture weapon, driving Izuku behind a clothing rack to avoid it. There’s a clatter of hangers falling to the floor as Izuku rounds the other side, charging back at Aizawa empty-handed. He spins, slipping around another strand of the hero’s weapon, and reaches for the staff at his back. With a sharp twist, it expands out to three times its size in two-tenths of a second, catching Aizawa in the stomach.

He stumbles back a step, breath knocked out of him before he tightly latches onto the staff and wraps his capture weapon around Izuku’s feet.

They smile at each other: Aizawa’s nothing more than a cat-like smirk and Izuku’s a sharp and blinding grin.

The fight is very much a back and forth one, and there’s something wild in Izuku’s eyes, like this is the kind of fight he’s been waiting for all along; like somehow all the times before this have only been games. Perhaps it’s because Aizawa isn’t holding back anymore. If he goes easy on him now he’ll forever rethink the decision he’d come to with Oboro. It’s like Izuku can *feel* the difference in this fight compared to all the ones before it.

The dangerous glint of his staff is reflected in his eyes.

In the end, the winner of the fight is a clear one.

Izuku pants, staff trained at the hero’s throat. He’s escaped Eraserhead several times as a vigilante. This will be the first time he’s beaten him.

He steps back, giving the hero space to sit up. Izuku takes a moment to recompose himself, shaking off the battle lust to offer Aizawa a hand up.

He takes it, allowing Izuku to pull him to his feet. The wildness in Izuku's eyes has been replaced by something brighter, shining with the light of a thousand stars at his victory.

He worries for a moment that Aizawa will be angry with him. He hasn't spoken yet, silently accepting Izuku's help up. Surely it must be a blow to the hero's pride. But then there's a barely there smile on the man's lips.

"Midoriya," Aizawa starts, "You didn't get the chance to participate in any of the hero course's internships." It's not a question, merely an observation.

Izuku nods in confirmation, something uneasy yet curious settles in his stomach.

"Would you like to?" the hero asks, voice softer than usual.

Izuku stalls for a moment, caught by surprise. There's a beat of silence where neither of them say anything and then suddenly the realization of what Aizawa was offering is sinking in. There's no ounce of hesitation in his answer. "Yes!"

"Usually this isn't something I consider so early on, but you've shown your capabilities. I don't have to worry about you not being able to protect yourself and this will help you from falling too far behind."

Izuku doesn't understand that the man's words are more of a reassurance to Aizawa on his decision than an explanation.

"In all honesty," Aizawa continues, "you received several internship offers after your performance in the sports festival, but because you're not enrolled in the hero course the school was forced to decline them. Even now, because of your circumstances, you won't be able to intern with anyone outside of the school's faculty. Which," he says, "means you'll be interning with me."

There's a sour drop of disappointed anger that washes through him when he hears about his previous offers. *Someone wanted me, someone wanted to train me*. But, he forces it down, swallows it without complaint because lingering will do him no good. Even so, he wants to take these words and put them in print, wants to slide the paper across the table to the principal himself, wants to wave it in front of his face as proof that the half-pity he'd offered that first day after coldly rejecting Izuku's application wasn't needed— wasn't wanted. He's sure that Nezu was a good man, but that hadn't changed what

he'd done in what *he* believed was Izuku's best interest.

Izuku was tired.

Tired of people deciding what *his* best interest was supposed to be; tired of pity and their disgust and their ignorance. Everywhere he went he was infantilized or looked down upon, seen as *less than*— like a second-rate human— like someone who wasn't special enough, who needed to be something *more* all for the sake of others' comfort. He was the same as everyone else until they realized— after that it was like a switch was flipped.

Midoriya Izuku never acted any different. It was only ever the people around him who did so.

But, things were different now, he had people in his life who loved him, who believed in him— people who saw him without pity. He had people who wanted to stay beside him even after seeing it all. He had a teacher, a *hero* , who wanted to train him, who saw his potential.

"You're strong, Midoriya," Aizawa presses, "Strong enough to beat me in a fight. You're ready; you've been ready. The world just wasn't ready to see it— *I* wasn't ready to see it. But, you held out and you proved your strength despite everyones' averted eyes. You've believed in yourself, *by* yourself, for long enough."

It wasn't much, maybe most of what the man was saying was really just your basic human decency, but it was more than Izuku had ever received before.

There's something soft and sad and *hopeful* in the boy's rising smile. Then a thought occurs to Izuku. "What about Shinsou?"

Aizawa's lips twitch downwards, not with disappointment, but with confliction. "Shinsou isn't where you are yet. In 1-A, many of those kids are able to rely on their quirks in most scenarios but, on the occasions they can't, they have their combat skills to fall back on. Shinsou doesn't have that yet. He's gotten much better at fighting, but he's still learning how to use his capture weapon."

Izuku nods, understanding. The only reason Izuku was being given this opportunity, after all, was because of his time as Piper. He's saved civilians, fought villains— even if Aizawa wasn't aware of this, his training and experience was still evident even when it's written off as something other. This wasn't something Aizawa usually offered, Izuku can tell. He was the exception.

This left a warm bubbling feeling in his chest. Izuku had always been the exception: the exception to a father's unconditional love, and the exception to Aldera's no bullying policy, and the exception to UA's hero course admittance system. Midoriya Izuku seemed to have always been the exception to the rule of 'everyone deserves a chance'. This time, however, was the first time he could say he was an exception and smile in response.

Izuku can feel tears building up, the happy and joyful kind. He holds them back, doesn't let them fall. Izuku scrubs at his eyes and for a moment Aizawa can almost pretend that there's a red one hidden beneath the closed lids.

Chapter End Notes

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME I APOLOGIZE LMAO
We are officially entering our last arc in Piper! It's been a long time since I first started Piper and it's crazy to think that it's finally coming to an end, I'm excited for what's to come though so I hope you all are as well!
I hope you all enjoyed this chapter! It was a lot of fun to work on!

If you haven't seen it already, I posted a piper canon spin off of Oboro, Aizawa, and Yamada from their younger days called Oboro Shirakumo's Extraordinary Guide to Remaining Completely Oblivious that you can check out!
I also published an official series of miscellaneous one-shots (both canon and not) some of them you've probably already seen but I thought I'd put them all in one place you can read here.

Unrelated to bnha at all I started posting a new fic for the dsmp if you're interested! It's mostly benchtrio/sbi centric, but it's also a vigilante fic so I hope you'll enjoy it as much as Piper! You can read it here :)

Red Sun

Chapter Summary

> Between training with Aizawa and his therapy sessions with Oboro, things are finally on their way to a brighter side of life for Izuku. But, in the shadows, a raid operation begins to take shape under the guidance of Naomasa and Nighteye and with Izuku's fighting skills finally up to par, Aizawa makes him an internship offer he just can't refuse.
>
> “You’re strong, Midoriya,” Aizawa presses, “Strong enough to beat me in a fight. You’re ready; you’ve been ready. The world just wasn’t ready to see it— I wasn’t ready to see it. But, you held out and you proved your strength despite everyones’ averted eyes. You’ve believed in yourself, by yourself, for long enough.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart!!!! [I HOPE I GOT ALL OF IT LET ME KNOW IF I DIDN'T]

Ferret x x x

deadnebula

sorrel x x x x x x x x(tw dead body/body mutilation)

jackalspine x x

calmwaves9

Izzarrka

tangerineanxiety

Izuku’s internship, as Aizawa had later explained, would require something the boy had only ever been able to dream of up until this point: a hero costume. The moment Aizawa brings it up to him he cries. Not willingly by any means, but when he mentions it so casually it makes everything feel *real*: like childhood dreams coming to fruition, like all his hard work finally paying off.

“It’s funny,” Izuku murmurs quietly, watching as Reo works. “You

originally made my vigilante gear and now you're the one that's making my hero stuff."

Reo smiles, soft and warm. "There's an actual manufacturing company working on the suit," he reminds him. "I'm only making some of your stuff because you're on a tight schedule."

"Still," Izuku chuckles.

"I'm honestly worried," Reo states, voice dropping lower.

"About what?"

The boy sighs, momentarily setting his tools aside. "I'm worried I'll make it too much like Piper's."

"You won't," Izuku reassures him, "*but*, even if you do, I'll consider it a homage. At worst they'll think I'm a Piper stan," he teases. In truth, however, he's also anxious. There's a lot that could go wrong with this and not simply because Reo's working on his gear. He's an ex-vigilante in a den of heroes, working alongside them like he's never been anything more. Aizawa had already suspected him before, had tried pinning him down during the sports festival before word of Piper's death had spread. A Piper stan certainly wasn't the worst people could assume. They both know that.

They laugh at the thought anyways. They were still teenagers after all, nothing more than kids that'd grown up too fast in the past year. Reo had been just as present for Iida's death as Midoriya had; had seen the fallout in the wake of USJ. He'd been there to piece Izuku back together after his death at the hands of Overhaul. Reo had seen it all, a witness in a different sense.

They deserved a break from the stress of it all. They deserved to laugh at jokes that couldn't hurt anyone. They deserved to be teenagers.

Reo would be graduating at the end of this year and Izuku would only get busier as he did his best to progress into the hero course. They'd get less time in the future to simply exist like they are now, confiding in one another's presence.

"I feel bad for making you work during summer break," Izuku sighs.

"It's all voluntary," Reo states, "It's not often you get to work on actual hero support gear outside of internships. There'll always be people that'll volunteer for it even if it means working over break."

“Nerd,” Izuku teases.

Reo raises a brow, amusement clear. “Says the one with, how many hero notebooks was it now?” He bumps shoulders with him before pushing himself up with a grunt, stretching. “You’ve gotta be up early right? Are you gonna stay over again or–?”

Izuku smiles, soft and gentle. “I’ll stay.” For now, their problems will stay far away—hazy in the foggy warmth of each other’s company. Tonight they will discard their blankets to escape the summer heat as a thunderstorm rumbles on the horizon. Tonight lightning will flash outside the window and they will watch it in the dark, taking in low whispers until someone eventually gives in to their exhaustion. And tomorrow, tomorrow they’ll push forward and handle all the unspoken matters as they countdown the days before Izuku’s internship.

Oboro smiles when Izuku pushes through his office door. “Midoriya.” he greets, “Lots of morning appointments recently.”

“Training starts at 10; I don’t want to miss any of it,” he responds with a soft smile, taking a seat in his usual spot.

“How’s that been going?”

Izuku nods. “The training’s hard, but it’s good. Necessary. My hero suit is supposed to be coming in soon too.” His excitement is palpable, but there’s something else there too.

Oboro picks up on it immediately. “Are you having any conflicting emotions about that?”

“It’s…” he falls silent, “This is something I’ve wanted since I was a kid. But… it’s also something I already had, in a sense.”

There’s a pause as they both absorb the information, then: “Do you miss it?” Oboro asks, pushing gently, “Do you miss being Piper?”

Izuku’s gaze shifts to his hands, absently watching as he fiddles with his fingers. “I shouldn’t,” he murmurs, “it was only a substitute for becoming a hero”

“But…” Oboro continues for him, “now that what you substituted it for is within reach–”

“Everything is at stake,” Izuku whispers. “Not that it wasn’t before, it’s just…” he trails off again.

“There’s more to lose,” Oboro finishes.

Izuku nods sagely. “I have friends that I love, teachers that actually care, dreams that are finally within reach. That first night as Piper…” He shakes his head. “I didn’t have any of that, not in the same way I have it now. I didn’t have Reo or Shinsou and I had just been rejected from the hero course and I was completely ostracized at school. All I had was my mom and the dojo.” He wrings his hands in his lap, nervous, distressed. “I used vigilantism to achieve everything people told me I couldn’t and it *worked*… until it didn’t. I became obsessed with that case I was working on and it got me killed. I shouldn’t miss it,” Izuku admonishes, shaking his head.

“It’s okay to miss it. It was a big part of your life–”

“It *was* my life,” Izuku cuts in quietly.

“*Exactly*,” Oboro pushes, stressing the importance of the idea, leaning forward in his seat. “People all across Musutafu and beyond are mourning Piper’s loss.” His brow furrows gently with some indescribable emotion. “It’s okay for you to mourn with them.”

Oboro lets the words hang there, studying the distressed line of Izuku’s shoulders. “I didn’t want to leave like that…” he says after a time, voice hoarse, “I didn’t–I didn’t think so many people would–”

Oboro remains quiet, letting him work through his thoughts.

“Would care,” Izuku finishes lamely. He buries his fingers into the hem of his shirt. “I figured people would forget, and they will, but… it’s taking longer than I expected. It’s not like I’m All Might or Hawks. I just helped a few people.”

“You said it before, that day you first told me about Piper,” Oboro reminds him softly, “You said, ‘Anyone can save people’. And you’re right, but not everyone cares enough to *keep* saving people: to do so without recognition, without pay, without any sort of notable benefits like you did. They cared because *you* cared,” Oboro states, “Piper was a hero for those forgotten. People won’t forget that as easily as you think.”

He chews at the corner of his lip. Reo said something similar in the wake of Piper’s death. Izuku had given it six weeks. Six weeks before

Piper would be forgotten by those mourning him. Six months until traces of him disappeared from the internet altogether. But, people continued to surpass his expectations.

Izuku hadn't expected the Piper memorials scattered around the city. After two weeks they were swept up by city cleaning crews, but onlookers refused to let them stay gone for long. Their items continually replaced by mourners new and old; swept up again and replaced and swept up and replaced in a vicious cycle until only a few items remained: a handful of ribbons and dead flowers scattered along the Dagobah fence line. He slips into the maze of towering garbage late that day for time to think only to find more tokens of mourning people had tossed down to keep hidden from the sweepers. Bouquets of dead flowers, bottles still full of tea and water, an assortment of foodstuffs; offerings to the boy who'd saved lives.

It's proof of Piper's existence beyond just the people he saved. Piper had inspired people too, given them hope of better days to come. People would forget eventually, as is human nature, but Piper had left behind a legacy bigger than himself.

Piper is a secret Izuku fully intends to take to his grave, but he can't help but continue to remember Oboro's words in the following days, watching as Aizawa goes over a few things from their last sparring match with Shinsou. Because people cared, people have always cared. The detective cared. Aizawa cared. Each had mourned his loss in their own way, clueless to the irony of their situations.

He was so close to them and yet—

Aizawa calls an end to their training for the day, waving the two teens off to pack and get cleaned up. Izuku and Shinsou had teamed together to beat Aizawa during their sparring match today, but it'd been a hard-fought battle now that the hero was more than familiar with their tricks and fighting styles. It'd been a good challenge for the two of them, learning to work in tandem with someone else. They'd won, eventually, *barely*. But it'd been enough for the two of them. A silent cheer, victory sparking in their eyes like meteor showers.

"Midoriya," Aizawa calls, waving him over.

Izuku parts from Shinsou with a reassuring nod as the other boy heads out first. Izuku figures this is something about today's training, perhaps something about his upcoming internship.

"Your suit came in," Aizawa informs him. And like the birth of the

universe there's an explosion of stars forming in the boy's eyes, a coming together of dust and superheated gas, a collision of galaxies. But, Aizawa does not stop there, "I'll be collaborating with a group of heroes two weeks from now, and though I'm aware it'll take time for you to get acquainted with your gear, I'd like you to join me as part of your internship."

Izuku's heart beats rapidly in his chest, adrenaline like a supernova in his system.

"Let me be clear," Aizawa's voice drops a note, dark eyes fastened to Izuku's, "that this is a dangerous mission, especially for someone without a lot of first-hand experience. I'm not forcing you to join, I'm giving you an option, but I want you to be aware of the risks." Izuku readies himself to answer right away, but Aizawa stops him with a raised hand. "Give yourself time to think about it."

But there is no thinking about it for Midoriya Izuku. His answer had been decided at birth— like the predestined turn of the universe.

"Eraserhead confirmed he's bringing an intern," Naomasa sighs. He looks better now. The dark circles under his eyes have faded now that he finally has something to focus on.

Nighteye had seen the disrepair that'd marred his face the first time Naomasa came to work on the Shei Hassaikai's case. After All Might's fight with AFO Nighteye kept his distance from people outside his own agency. He preferred to handle all the planning and paperwork on his own, or at the very least in the quiet privacy of his own office. But, he'd been friends with the detective in the past. He'd even been in attendance at the hero's wedding. Nighteye doesn't look up from his paperwork. "Who is it? I didn't think he usually took interns."

Naomasa scratches at his chin. "One of his first years."

Nighteye does look up at that. "A first year?"

"He vouched for their abilities," Naomasa explains, "so at the very least, they must be able to hold their own. I doubt it's a decision he made just for fun. He should be sending his info over in the next few days."

Nighteye hums, eyes flickering towards his computer screen. The face of Kai Chisaki stares back at him. He fiddles absently with the ring on his finger. Everything was finally coming together, all the pieces were

falling into place.

Together they count down the days until the operation.

Midoriya Izuku,

This letter is to act as a brief summary of your costume's design features. Specifics for each item will be listed in a separate sheet. The suit is split into three different pieces, the undershirt, vest, and pants, all of which can be put on in a timely manner. The elbow pads you requested are built into the undershirt to shorten change time. Your knee pads and shin guards are the same. All materials used in the production of these pieces are a high mesh, tear-resistant fabric that can protect against most basic slashing attacks from knife-like weapons. The boots have been reinforced with steel toes and fitted with climbing spikes along the front seam and, upon your request, retractable knives have been added at the back of the heel. The mask has been equipt with respirator filters, comm systems, and a few other additional features discussed later. Your gloves have been fitted with brass knuckles and rubber palms to assist with grip.

Activation methods for all features are listed on their respective pages.

Other essential gear had been included in a separate case at the bottom. You can find a comprehensive list of any items not mentioned above can be found on page two. Please make sure to read the entirety of this letter before experimenting with any of the gear as servals of the included items can be dangerous to the user if mishandled.

We sincerely hope you are able to put this gear to good use.

Best,

HGG Design Team

Izuku reads the entire letter three times in his excitement: skimming over the list of gear, rereading their functions. His eyes frequently find his name at the top of the letter, slipping back to that first page and checking again and again that this is *his* letter, that it's meant for him — that this is *his* gear, *his* costume. The entire time his grin is an unmatched thing. His fingers curl gently into the paper, crinkling the edges. He'd had dreams crushed by letters like these, this time was different.

He's alone in the locker room as he sets the papers aside. He hadn't taken any of the gear out yet in favor of reading the letter, partly out of nerves, partly out of respect for the designers.

The first piece, laid out on top, is what he assumes is his undershirt. It's mostly black, turning dark gray where the elbow pads have been attached. It looks skin tight, extending down to his wrists and up a good quarter of his neck where he spots a zipper at the front. There's no hood.

He pauses at the thought.

Piper's hood had always been a bit of an inconvenience to him, even if it was necessary to protect his identity. But, he didn't have to worry about that now. He didn't have to change his eye color, didn't have to hide his hair.

The pants are next. It sticks with the same dark color scheme— turning lighter at the knee pads but darker still where there's a more protective material that wraps his thighs.

There's a belt— it's a simple design: light gray and scattered with pouches and loops to hold weapons, supplies, the occasional late-night snack should he wish. He snorts at the idea.

Something else inside catches Izuku's attention, a splash of color. He pulls out the next piece reverently. He'd left a majority of his costume's design elements up to chance, leaving it up to the team that was working on it. The piece he pulls out is the vest they'd mentioned in the letter, not too unsimilar to Piper's bulletproof one, though this has clearly been crafted with more care. There's sections of matte armor plating secured across the front and back, following the line of his ribs and spine while still leaving gaps for flexibility. It's all dark shades of gray, but there, in the center of the chest is a large red spot the size of his hand. He holds it tight. The rest of his gear is mostly black and gray; the red the only real pop of color on anything, perfect for the underground hero work he expects to be doing in the future. It's most likely meant to represent Japan's flag, like the rising of the morning sun over a still dark sea. But for him, for Izuku, all he can see is Piper's eye, Iida's, *Eri's* .

He runs a thumb over the material. It's lightweight, durable, *perfect.*

Below it are his boots. Similar to Piper's but different in the ways that matter. There's a splash of red on the toe caps and Piper's metal spikes have been replaced by three dark ones that aren't attached to, but

rather extend out as a part of the front outsoles. And, if he studies the backs close enough, he can see a glint of metal through two identical slits in the heels.

Beneath the boots are two secondary carrying cases. He opens the first one to find a second note. It's much smaller than the last, clearly torn out of the corner of a notebook. It reads: *try not to electrocute yourself this time :)*

He feels a smile twitch at the corners of his lips. It's Reo's handwriting.

In the case there are a handful of things to fill the loops and pouches on his belt: handcuffs and smoke bombs and flash grenades and something *else* . He picks it up carefully. It's small, closer to the size of one of his previous tonfa. He'd read the letter; he knows exactly what this is. That doesn't make him anymore prepared to see it. Izuku already has a staff; it's retractable, still new, a gift from Reo after he'd taken second in his martial arts tournament.

Seems like Reo thought it wasn't enough for hero work.

With a press of a button the staff expands out on either side. Izuku takes a step back, giving it a careful spin. He studies it with an awed sort of reverence. There's a lot more tech on it than he's used to, completely different to any he's owned in the past. He passes it to one hand, getting a feel for the weight of it when he feels a second button give way under his thumb.

There's a crackling flash of electricity from both ends of the staff.

Izuku jumps, first startled, then amused. He lets out a laugh, a tangle of mirthful disbelief. "I electrocute myself *one* time." He gives the staff another twirl, now conscious of the button placement before sitting down on the bench, looking again for the button to retract it down to storage size. It retracts, shrinking to the size of a short staff— a more manageable size for close-quarters combat. He smiles pressing the button once more as it finally returns to its original size and he moves to put it back.

In the second case is his mask. He tenses, heart rate spiking because for a moment it's not *his* mask— for a moment he's staring down at Piper's mask and Piper's staff and the suit in the case is Piper's, *not* Midoriya's. And he's terrified that it's too much; that once everything's combined it'll be too similar. That he'll be found out the moment he puts it all on. With his staff and his boots and his mask. His silhouette

would be near identical. He pulls the mask out slowly, carefully, studying the distorted reflection of colors in the absence of a mirror finish. It's got the same arrow tipped front over his mouth and nose. But where Piper's had ended just before his ear, this comes up and over. There's a switching of material here to something matte and black, littered with a handful of unlit LEDs. The part that covers the top of his ear spikes out towards the back of his head— reminiscent of some cybernetic wing or antenna.

He takes a breath.

Piper was dead. No one who knew this would expect otherwise. There's nothing remarkable about his suit, nothing that screams, 'Piper's alive'.

Thus, he begins the slow process of donning still unfamiliar gear. Tying shoes, buckling belts; in the mirror he slots the mask over his face.

Aizawa knocks, slipping in to lean against the doorframe. He watches Izuku from behind, quiet for a moment before speaking, "It looks good."

Izuku turns to him. He clenches his fists, unclenches them, clenches again— getting a feel for the gloves. He nods, too awed to respond with words.

Aizawa lets out a low hum, still watching him. There's no special reaction to seeing him, no glint of recognition in his eyes. "I guess all you need now is a hero name."

But Izuku already knows— already has an answer for him. He'd known the moment he'd opened that first case. He turns back to the mirror. Surprisingly he doesn't find Piper in his reflection. There's someone else in his place, neither Piper nor Midoriya. Someone new, untested but *strong* . In the mirror is a hero, one that would eclipse his old self, become stronger than the person he was before.

Within him burns a sun, a red eye that is both his and not. He studies the Hinomaru on his chest. He debates his decision only a second longer.

"...The Eclipse Hero," Izuku starts softly, confidence growing as he speaks, "Red Sun."

There's a hint of a smirk that flickers at Aizawa's lips. "Quite the

theme you've got going there." He motions Izuku towards the door with a nod of his head. "We'll run it by Midnight later, see what she says. For now, let's take your gear for a test run. You got everything?"

Izuku reaches down, slotting his new staff into place on his belt. He gives a nod, striding after Aizawa as he turns to leave.

"For what it's worth," the hero adds, "I think you've landed yourself a pretty solid name there, kid."

Izuku only grins in response, smile hidden behind his mask.

They had work to do.

Name: Midoriya Izuku Alias: Eclipse Hero: Red Sun

Age: 15 Height: 165cm

Affiliated Agency or School: UA High School - General Education

Art Commission by Taztaztaz-blog!

Lilac

@lilacminds

I doubt most people will remember, but I'm here to remind people that Piper actually got his name because he went around beating up bad guys with a literal pipe

4:21 PM · 7/18/32 · Twitter Web App

26 Retweets **132** Likes

VBCHAMP @vsverus · 2h

Replying to @**lilacminds**

PLEASE WHY HAS NO ONE EVER TOLD

ME THIS GEJSGSNSVEN

Yerum @urmumshouse · 1h

Replying to @**lilacminds**

THERE'S NO WAY LILAC, TELL ME

YOURE JOKING RN

Kami⚡ @portcharge · 1h

Replying to @**lilacminds**

LMAOOOOOO

@OboroFollower7 · 39m

Replying to @**lilacminds**

Kouyou Hanaki @kyhole · now

Replying to @**lilacminds**

Bro you've gotta stfu about Piper no

one cares my guy

Chapter End Notes

Hello!! A lot has happened since I last posted, both good and bad so thank you everyone for your patience :)

IN OTHER NEWS!! IZUKU HAS A HERO COSTUME!! AND A HERO NAME!!!!! (it's space themed, are you really surprised kjdshfkjads) Things are finally looking up for Izuku and he's now officially been assigned to the Overhaul raid! Though he's not yet aware of this fact himself :) I feel like I've been saying this at the end of every chapter but Piper really is starting to wrap up into its final arc! Everything feels like it's going by so fast and yet so slow at the same time I hope everyone's looking forward to seeing how everything turns out!

I COMMISSIONED THE WONDERFUL ART FOR NEW IZUKU'S COSTUME FROM THE BELOVED TAZ (I LINKED HIS TUMBLR BENEATH THE PIC SO PLEASE GO CHECK HIM OUT HE'S VERY TALENTED (ps he also helped with Izuku's hero name □)), I always had people asking after references of Piper's original vigilante costume, but I never had anything to show them so THIS TIME I HAVE LEARNED FROM MY MISTAKES AND GIVEN THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANTED BEFORE THEY EVEN GOT TO ASK LOLOLOL

A lot of work has gone into this chapter, not just from me but from many of my friends as well so thanks to all the homies for your help!! I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH AND I COULDN'T HAVE DONE THIS WITHOUT YOU!! Thank you for always being there when I need you :)

I feel like I'm forgetting something but I guess it's too late for that now lmao
Until next time!

Aberration

Chapter Summary

> Between preparing for his internship with Aizawa and meaningful talks about the past and what it meant to be Piper, Izuku finds himself in the possession of his first proper hero suit. And, with the red eye of Piper now emblazoned on his chest, he picks a new name.
>
> Within him burns a sun, a red eye that is both his and not. He studies the Hinomaru on his chest. He debates his decision only a second longer.
> "...The Eclipse Hero," Izuku starts softly, confidence growing as he speaks, "Red Sun."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There's a sense of nostalgia that comes from donning new hero gear. There's a familiarity in the feel of it against his skin, not all that different from Piper. But, if Aizawa's surprised at the rate at which Izuku accustoms himself with his suit he doesn't show it. Within the span of a few days, he's already comfortable using it all.

He still has a bit of trouble getting the knives in his boots to come out. But, that's something that can only be fixed with time and practice, and from the look on Aizawa's face the last two days, they're running out of both. It's an ominous feeling. Aizawa hadn't mentioned much about what they'd be doing for his internship just yet, focused more so on preparing Izuku for what's to come. But, by the end of the week, he's being pulled aside once again, Shinsou leaving him with a sly grin and joking salute.

Aizawa leads him to a private meeting room, similar to the one they'd used when the hero first offered to train him. He sits on the seat opposite Izuku, an unreadable expression on his face. "I told you before that we'd be working with a group of heroes. It's time I told you a bit more. Everything I say from here on is classified information. You can't tell anyone about what I'm about to tell you: not classmates, not friends, not family." He waits for Izuku's confirmation, the teen offering a quick, terse nod in understanding. Aizawa sighs. "Nighteye's hero agency is fronting a raid operation on

a group of villains next week. Tomorrow is the first formal meeting for it. You'll meet me here and we'll head over from there. You don't need to bring anything, just make sure you're in your school uniform. If anyone asks what we're doing, tell them we're training as part of your internship. Don't mention names or locations either. It could jeopardize the operation if word gets out."

Izuku nods along with each new statement, both nervous and excited for what's to become his first trek into legal heroism. But, there's a sense of unease that settles in the pit of his stomach. Something foreboding that hangs over his head, clings to his skin—it doesn't go away when he leaves for the day, or when he finally crawls into bed.

He chalks it up to unsettled nerves.

That night he's haunted by nightmares he can't remember.

His unease only grows as Aizawa drives them to Nighteye's agency. It's a long trip, but mostly quiet during the ride there, giving Izuku more unwanted time to brew in the feeling. Aizawa offers him a few words about what to expect; explaining that there would also be a few older UA students there participating in their own internships as well.

Nighteye's agency is located in a rather plain building, five stories tall and seemingly too big for how many people he knows the hero has employed on a regular basis. It's quiet when they walk in, a hero he recognizes as Bubble Girl directing them to another floor where the meeting's being held.

Aizawa stops them outside the door to the meeting room. "You ready?" he asks, voice hardly more than a rumble.

"No choice but to be," Izuku huffs, amusement and nerves a swirling cocktail in his gut.

The corner of Aizawa's lip twitches upwards with the beginning of a smile before he wipes it away with a nod and opens the door.

There's far more people than he'd expected. He spots at least five other UA students in the room and even more heroes. He sees Ryukyu, and Snipe, and, Centipeder, and Fatgum and some two dozen others he can't be bothered to recall the names of right now because there, at the front of the room, amidst the chaos, stands Tsukauchi Naomasa.

Izuku hasn't seen much of him since Iida's death, though Reo had reassured him that he'd been healing fine and was already back at work. Izuku's body grinds to a slow halt, cold fear threatening to stall his heart. Because for one long, terrible moment he's certain he's just walked in on a Piper investigation, or worse: a capture operation in its final stages. That Aizawa, somehow having deduced his identity, had led him straight into a trap. He should've known Piper's death wouldn't have been the end of the detective's involvement in his case. Aizawa too had once been a part of the operation to track down Piper, it wouldn't be a stretch to think he'd participate in the investigation following his supposed death. But there's too many people here, too much set up. Perhaps it was all some horribly strange coincidence that Midoriya Izuku was here.

He feels nauseous. His unease grows.

Naomasa says something to Sir Nighteye, inaudible from this distance. The detective is too engrossed with the papers in his hands to notice their entry. Nighteye however, greets Aizawa with a nod of his head.

Nighteye's sudden lack of response is what ultimately gains Naomasa's attention and Izuku can feel the exact moment the detective's eyes land on him, burning into the side of his head as he and Aizawa take their seats. He spares the detective a single glance, a weak smile pulling at his lips. Naomasa's gaze flickers to Aizawa, drawing his own conclusions about Izuku's presence.

Bubble Girl and another hero slip into the room behind them, Nighteye's gaze flickering to her as they too take their seats at the table. "Now that everyone's here, we'll start the meeting," Nighteye announces, turning to the detective.

Naomasa rolls his shoulders, straightening his posture as he takes the room's attention. His confusion about Izuku's arrival is replaced by something darker, more serious. "My name is Naomasa Tsukauchi. I'm a detective with Musutafu's quirk crimes division," he starts, before taking a short pause, "Over the last eight months I've been working with a team on an investigation into the Shie Hassaikai."

Like the death of a star, the unease he'd been feeling explodes outwards in his chest. The last two words that come out of Naomasa's mouth brings Izuku's world to a standstill, chills racing through him. At those two words, Izuku feels something *crack*. The unease makes sense now. The dread he'd felt since Aizawa had announced their attendance.

“The Shie Hassaikai,” Naomasa repeats, “is one of the last major surviving yakuza groups this side of Japan. They’re well known in the area they’re based in, but have, from an outsider’s point of view, stayed out of any legal trouble.”

This wasn’t *Piper’s* case like Izuku had originally feared. It was *a* Piper case. The last major case he’d worked on before his death. With Overhaul. With *Eri*.

Before the discovery of Piper’s death, Giran had sent a letter for him, addressed to Naomasa with all the research and evidence he’d collected on the Shie Hassaikai and other cases he’d worked. He’d handed it over in the hopes it’d reach the hands of someone more capable than Piper. And now, here it was, being handed back to him by the same man he’d given it to.

“If they’d done nothing we wouldn’t all be here,” one of the other heroes cuts in, clearly annoyed with the pace of the meeting.

Naomasa nods and takes a breath, steadying himself for something. “Due to some outside intel we received, a raid operation was conducted on one of the group's known properties last December. There, we were able to rescue a civilian by the name of Kogane Gizō that was being confined by the group and exploited for his quirk. Some of you may recall this operation as you were a part of it.” He briefly looks to Centipeder, giving him some unknown signal.

Centipeder pushes himself up from Nighteye’s other side, turning to address those gathered. “According to the investigations we’ve conducted, the Hassaikai has had extensive contact with outside criminal groups over the past few years, more so since our initial raid than ever before. Their goal appears to be the expansion of the group and the accumulation of funds. Gizō’s quirk allows him to turn everyday items into gold. Rescuing him effectively cut off an important source of their income. A few months following this, a secondary raid was carried out on another one of the group’s properties, where we were able to capture a few more of the group’s members.”

“We’ve known since December about their record of kidnapping people,” Rock Lock cuts in, eyes narrowed, “why wait so long between raids to make our move?”

Izuku can feel his fists clench in his lap, muscles tensing. He wants to ask the same question. Has Eri really been with those men for this

long? He's not angry with any of the people here. He finds no fault in their shortcomings—only his own. He bites at the insides of his cheeks, shame hot like a branding iron across his chest. Has it really been so long since he last saw her?

"Because they're unlikely to give us another chance," Nighteye replies coldly, stepping in, "They're a cautious group, and after two raid operations they're very aware that we're on their trail. The group has a young leader, but he's meticulous. If we fail to end this with a final, decisive strike, they will not give us another chance."

Izuku can feel fear and shame beginning to choke him, rising up like the sea at high tide. The sun in his chest turns cold.

"He was thorough in severing all ties to any villains we did manage to capture during the raids as well as any of the crimes they were committing in his name," Nighteye continues, "In doing so, he's managed to keep both himself and the Hassaikai itself from facing any legal repercussions. Due to lack of solid evidence against them we've been unable to be rash with our movements."

Centipeder picks back up for him. "The outside intel we received was from the now deceased vigilante, Pied Piper. He provided us with evidence that a young girl named Eri was likely being abused and held captive by the Hassaikai as well as a possible location for where she was being held. This is what further spurred our initial interest in the group. After conducting our own investigation on the matter we rushed to gather a team to conduct a rescue mission on what we assumed was the most likely location. While we were incorrect on this assumption, we did discover Kogane Gizō, whose case let us know that the Hassaikai are not opposed to using civilians for their quirks. This is likely the case for the young girl as well. From Piper's testimony, we were able to learn that her quirk is able to reverse or rewind an individual's body to previous states. In theory, it can be used to heal someone and is what we assume is their motive for keeping her. On top of the missing person cases we've managed to connect to them thus far, it's also suspected that they've begun peddling homebrew quirk-enhancing drugs that were previously only available in the US. It's likely an attempt to earn back some of the money lost to them after Gizō's rescue, but it's clear from some of their purchase history in the last year that this possible drug operation is something they've been planning for a long time. Though we're still somewhat lacking in evidence for this, the implications for all of our other investigations heavily imply its likelihood."

“I’m wary,” someone else says, “you’re saying you don’t have much evidence for what this group has been doing, but with all these heroes here you’re clearly ready to make a big move despite it.”

Centipeder’s eyes narrow. “We may be lacking some proof in relation to their drug operation, but it’s still very clear that they’re connected to a handful of kidnapping cases even if they’ve successfully managed to cover their tracks. Not to mention that many of the groups that the Hassaikai have recently been in contact with are known criminal organizations. That alone should be enough for heroes to intervene.”

The other hero concedes, raising their hands in a placating manner.

“The drugs the Hassaikai are suspected to be making are incomplete,” Naomasa informs the room, “At current, they’re incomparable to the ones being passed around the US. Given enough time, however, they could reach full development and wreak havoc across the country. If a young girl’s life isn’t enough for you—” he finishes coldly, “this should be.”

“That’s.. not what I was trying to imply, I apologize.”

“This was Piper’s last wish,” Naomasa states firmly, stepping in. He looks between all those gathered. His gaze falls on Izuku for a tenth of a second before zipping away again. “Even if you didn’t care for him, even if you have no idea who I’m talking about; *he* is the reason we’re here. *He* is the one that brought us this information to begin with. There’s a little girl out there, waiting for someone to save her. Soon we’re going to be doing just that.”

“If she’s still alive.” A quiet falls through the room, all eyes turning towards the source of the voice. Rock Lock leans back in his seat, arms crossed. “I’ve participated in both raid operations this far, Detective. I’m aware of the messed up shit this group has done. They wouldn’t hesitate to kill a kid if it meant covering their tracks. The only evidence we even have of her existence is some grainy security camera footage with eyewitness testimony from a *dead* vigilante and some vague intel that she *was* alive several months ago after we captured that other exec in the second raid.”

There’s a rumble of a black hole in the pit of Izuku’s stomach where the supernova has begun to collapse inwards, its gravity dangerous and all-consuming.

“While I might usually be inclined to agree with you,” Nighteye steps in, “the reason we discovered the underground compound is the same

reason we know that she was alive as of three days ago." That's enough to shut up any more disgruntled voices amongst the crowd. "This mission is dangerous," he continues, "The Shie Hassaikai is currently one of the more formidable organizations this half of Japan, mainly due to its size and the quirks registered to its executive members. Chisaki Kai is the leader of the group. He has a handful of close followers. These are the villains our main infiltration team will likely be dealing with." He steps to the side, projector flickering to life behind him, flipping slowly through a list of profiles, each with their own description of the individuals: Nemoto Shin, Katsukame Rikiya, Tabe Soramitsu. "Two of these executive members are not listed here. Setsuno Toya, who was captured during the first raid with the help of the vigilante Pied Piper, and Rappa Kendo, a previously undiscovered executive member, was captured during the second raid, leaving us with these eight individuals."

Midoriya's eyes hone in on the profile of Hojo Yū as it appears on the wall, vision tunneling at the sight of the familiar face. Images of shining crystal breaking through his hand come to him unbidden, of bones snapping, of large ruby eyes that have seen too much. There's a rage that burns through him, hot and raw and as painful as an open wound.

The screen changes: Sakaki Deidoro, Irinaka Joi, Kurono Hari, Chisaki Kai.

Izuku's vision turns to static at the edges.

"Chisaki Kai is the leader of this group," Nighteye announces, "His quirk: Overhaul, is the most dangerous of this group, granting him the ability to both *dismantle* and *restore*."

Izuku's breath catches in his throat, frozen at the sight of the man on screen. The dark, feathery hair, the golden eyes, the gilded mask. Izuku's terror beseeches him to run, to cower, to pull away, to *stay out of reach*.

"A quirk that can both destroy and heal."

Izuku can feel the phantom brush of fingers against his. He remembers coming undone. He remembers *dying*. *This* was the man that'd killed him. *This* was the man that had taken Eri. This was the man who had taken her childhood, her innocence, her sense of self-preservation. She'd walked away from Izuku, had chosen to go back to protect *him*.

He feels terror. He feels rage.

Aizawa spares him an unreadable glance; studying the harsh line of his clenched fists, the white of his knuckles. He can sense the boy's fear.

"The mission," Nighteye states, "is to retrieve the girl, Eri, and capture all members of the Shie Hassaikai. Rescuing the girl is our top priority, but failing to capture Overhaul or any of his men could prove detrimental to her future safety."

Izuku takes a breath, as shaky and shallow as it is, and he holds it. With it he reigns in his emotions, tucks them in a box out of reach because he has to. Because the more they speak the more those words fester in his heart, in his head.

He has to pretend right now: that he knows nothing, that he hasn't borne witness to these crimes firsthand, that he has not died. That he has never been anyone more than the Eclipse Hero: Red Sun.

He takes another breath. He has to focus, for Eri's sake.

"As you're now aware, we've had operatives in the field doing groundwork and research into the Hassaikai," Naomasa informs them, "In that time we amassed a sizable amount of data on the leader and members of the group. After locating their main base we discovered the existence of undocumented, underground facilities within use under it. We'll be conducting a raid operation on this base as well as a handful of other properties." The projector flickers behind him, showing the overview of a sprawling traditional Japanese compound. It makes him wonder why it'd taken so long to track down in the first place. "No matter what property you end up assigned to we'll all be moving at the same time. It's important that these raids are carried out simultaneously to give them no time to cover their tracks. We're still waiting on warrants for several of the properties, but we're aiming for July 30th as our date. That means we have a little over a week from now to finish our preparations. From here we'll be talking roles and assigned locations; Bubble Girl will start handing out location-specific packets for everyone to study on what to expect and who you're likely to encounter–"

Izuku holds the packet in his hands, reading Overhaul's profile over and over again. There's a picture of him printed on the front, a man he thought he'd only ever see again in his nightmares. He finds his eyes lingering there, vision going blurry where he finds himself

disconnecting. He fights the feeling, forcing himself to turn the page. He studies the next person's face, memorizes their description, their quirk.

There's a voice to his left. "Eraser, can I speak with you for a moment?" Izuku turns to see Naomasa. He and Izuku share a brief nod with one another before he turns back to the hero.

Aizawa must pick up on some unspoken instruction as he pushes himself out of his seat. He glances at Izuku. "I'll be back."

Izuku takes a breath; lets his eyes fall closed. He lets the vast emptiness lull him. He opens his eyes again and watches the universe unfold before him—the heroes milling about the room, having conversations, planning, plotting, all for the sake of the girl Izuku failed to save.

There would be no more failure. This time he would succeed, *they* would succeed. Because Izuku wasn't alone anymore, because there were people at his back supporting him, supporting his cause. And finally, *finally*, he could rely on them, no holds barred.

It was a peculiar feeling to say the least; reassuring; nerve-wracking.

When he gets home he'll tell Reo everything, confidential or not. Because Reo had been the first to support him—had been the first to stand at his back and say 'you can do this, I've got you'. Because Reo was his best friend—because Reo was more than that.

He buckles down on reading. They're not allowed to take the packets home so he'll memorize the content before Aizawa finds him again and explains it's time to leave.

"So they brought you in to counteract any of the quirk-enhancing drugs, right?" Izuku asks quietly. He keeps his eyes straight, watching the road.

Aizawa does the same. "Most likely."

Midoriya makes a short hum in acknowledgment.

There's another beat of silence. "There's still time to back out," Aizawa offers, "We can wait awhile, do a proper internship. You may've agreed to this earlier, but now that you're aware of just how

dangerous this raid will be—"

"I'll do it," Izuku states, "After hearing all that…" He swallows harshly, fists clenching in his lap where the emotions he'd shoved down earlier make their way back. "How could I possibly—" He can feel himself choking up and cuts himself off, head bowing over his lap. He takes a steadying breath.

Aizawa spares him a glance from the corner of his eye.

"How could I possibly–"

How could I possibly stand–

"–give up here?"

–to fail her again?

Aizawa sighs, long and heavy; the barest hint of a smile on his lips. "If you're sure you're up for it, I'll trust you."

Reo's face visibly drops when he tells him the news.

Izuku had expected it. It doesn't, however, make it any easier to witness. "Hey," he murmurs, gently taking Reo's hands in his when the older teen takes an unsteady seat on the bed. "It'll be okay this time. We'll be safe."

"My uncle too?" he asks.

Izuku only nods.

There's a shaky sigh. "I just..." he trails off, "I thought–"

Izuku picks up for him. "I know."

"I thought we were done with this," Reo murmurs.

Green searches for amber, finding nothing. "Things will be different this time."

"…Will they?" The question is a quiet one.

But, there's determination in Izuku's eyes, fiery where he's had nothing but time to think of the consequences of failure. "I'm not

alone anymore. You should've seen how many heroes there were!" He lets out a soft laugh. "Piper–" his voice takes a softer note, "Piper was independent, and stubborn, and pushed himself beyond his limits and his resources and his time. Red Sun—Red Sun is not Piper."

There's a quiet pause. "But Midoriya Izuku.. is still Midoriya Izuku," Reo whispers.

Silence follows his words and Izuku's grip on Reo's hands tightens reassuringly. "…The Midoriya Izuku you met on that fire escape isn't the one you know now," he breathes. "You… are the reason Red Sun exists." He gives the words a moment to sink in as Reo peeks up at him, eyes raw like open wounds, like festering secrets that can't be told. Reo still thinks he's the only one to know. "...I told my therapist —about Piper," Izuku confesses suddenly.

Reo's eyes widen, searching for answers. "What," he asks in disbelief.

"He's a good man," Izuku reassures him quickly, "It wasn't right to make you carry so much of my burden by yourself. I could always go to you, but you had no one to go to. He knows it's in the past. He won't tell anyone. I trust him with that."

"But—" Reo tries again, desperate for some sort of understanding.

"He won't," Izuku repeats, "He hasn't."

Reo's mouth opens and closes, searching for words. "When did you tell him?" he finishes lamely.

"After Stain," Izuku replies. "I didn't tell you this to worry you. It's just… an apology—a promise, that I'll do better in the future, that I *am* doing better." He scrubs at his eyes. "Reo, without you, there would be no Piper. No Red Sun. No Midoriya Izuku. *You* made me into the person I am now. You saved me—taught me, more than anyone else in this life ever will. How to cherish myself, how to take care of myself, how to love myself in the same way you love me. You were the first person to tell me I could be a hero, knowing that I was quirkless, knowing who I was. You were the first person to believe in me. Before there was anyone else, there was you," Izuku croaks, swallowing harshly where he can feel his emotions building up. "There's always been you."

Reo watches him without words, silent where he's searching Izuku's eyes for something.

“I learned the hard way that in saving others, you could destroy someone else. But this time—this time I’ll be with some of the best heroes in Japan. And… and we’re finally gonna save that girl, Reo. We’ll do it; this time for sure.”

“You saved me too, you know?” Reo murmurs, “In your own way,” there’s a half-chuckle. “I trust you, Izuku. But… you understand, right?” he asks, voice dropping a decibel.

“Better than anyone,” Izuku breathes.

Reo pulls him into a hug, holding tight. “You have to be careful, both you and my uncle.”

“I’ll keep my eye on him.”

Reo lets out a heavy sigh, shoulders drooping. He pulls away, looking at Izuku. “You can’t die.”

“I won’t.”

“You can’t,” Reo pleads again. Burning amber and shining emerald. The universe sways beneath them, heavy with the burden of past sins and broken promises.

Izuku would not break another.

He bumps his head against Reo’s, eyes fluttering shut. “I promise.”

Chapter End Notes

> First and foremost SORRY TO ANYONE WHO CAME HERE LOOKING FOR A NEW CHAPTER LAST WEEK AKSJDHFAKDSJF Reigen Arataka (mp100) was losing to San Undertale in a Twitter poll and it was simply unacceptable so I made the executive decision to abuse my power 🗿 (yes he still lost but that's beside the point) ANYWAYS WOOOOOO ANOTHER CHAPTER UNDER THE BELT
> I bet literally everyone saw that coming lmao, but YES!!!! Piper's final arc!! The ultimate showdown against the Shei Hassaikai! It's been a wild ride these last three years but we're finally coming to a close, thank you to everyone that's stuck around for this long! And to the people that have been reading since day one (YES I SEE YOU, I KNOW YOUR SECRETS, I'VE READ YOUR BOOKMARKS IK YOU'RE KEEPING UP LMAO /pos) I HOPE YOU CONTINUE TO ENJOY IT UNTIL IT'S LAST!! THANK YOU FOR

ALL YOUR SUPPORT TILL NOW!!! 💕💕💕

Until next time!

Perseus Constellation

Chapter Summary

> After Aizawa's initial offer of an internship, Izuku finally finds just what it will entail. Sitting in a meeting room, squished between heroes he's looked up to his whole life, Izuku discovers just who they'll be fighting.
> Overhaul's face stares back at him from the projector.
>
> Piper had handed over Eri's case to Naomasa with the hope that it'd reach the hands of someone more capable than himself. And now, here it was, being handed back to him by the same man he'd given it to.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

FANART BECAUSE I FORGOT LAST TIME ASKDFJHASDF

blackholeca x x x x x

ferret

skeleton-forest x

art_can_change_the_world

dumbass---tm

M0ff1nMan x x

tangerineanxiety

goose (MEME!!)

sorrel x x x x x x x

decimatedurdad

catrical

Despite his talk with Reo, Izuku still has his own buried anxieties about the upcoming raid. And it feels strange, Izuku thinks, to see how

everyone else simply continues to go about their lives Everyone around him carries about the mundanity of their day, clueless to the swarm of thoughts in his head, to the turmoil in his chest.

Their normalcy chants to him, *'nothing is wrong'*. But it's a lie, to Reo, to Aizawa, to the detective. It's a lie because they know better, because they understand what's to be at stake in the coming days; because they understand the lives that will be on the line. The quiet wait is agonizing. It gives Izuku too much time to think.

He does what he can to keep himself distracted, scribbling hero notes to keep himself focused. At training he pushes himself more so than usual—intent on drowning out his creeping anxieties with the pounding of blood in his ears. Because Reo trusted him, because some days Izuku still didn't trust himself.

He meets Reo and Shinsou for lunch and they eat like normal. They laugh like nothing's wrong— because Izuku's a good liar, and at some point Reo became one too.

But, he finds comfort in the company of friendly faces.

At the dojo Hirano greets him excitedly, "Midoriya!" She rushes forward to drag him into the dojo, barely giving him enough time to slip his shoes off. "I never see you anymore!" she whines playfully, "You've been ditching us for another dojo haven't you?" she asks with a squint to her eyes.

Izuku snorts, gently pulling away to put his stuff down. It's been a while since he's been able to come by, busy training alongside Aizawa and Shinsou during the hours he might usually have found himself at the dojo.

A hand ruffles his hair from behind. "He's busy with hero training," Ji-Woo states. There's a rare, soft smile on her lips; the cool glow of her freckles shining in the black of her eyes. "It's good to see you, Midoriya."

Hirano looks at him with a blinding excitement. "Really?! You're actually doing it?!"

A flush rises to Izuku's cheeks.

"He took third in UA's sports festival of course he is," Gamon cuts in, bright smile on their face. They use Hirano's head for an armrest before she bats it away.

“Do you have a hero suit yet?” Hirano asks, turning back to him. She bounces a few times on the balls of her feet. “You have to show me!”

“I don’t have any pictures of it right now, but I’ll try to get one next time,” Izuku answers, scratching shyly at the back of his head.

“You have to show us later, promise?” Hirano pleads.

Izuku laughs, bright and genuine because, for a moment, he can set aside his worries. “I promise.” To Izuku, who had no cousins or distant relatives to keep in touch with, the people here filled that role. Even if they didn’t know everything about each other, even if they only ever met on the tatami mats of the dojo, he had found a home here. He’d built his dreams—too big for a quirkless kid—through blood and sweat and bruises and he’d done it all on these mats. The look in Ji-Woo’s eyes is still unreadable, but on her face is an unmistakable kindness for the kid she’d watched grow up.

Gamon pulls him into a one-armed hug. “I’ll hold you to that,” they warn with a grin.

It’s easy to forget around them.

At home he watches movies with Inko, curled up on the couch eating lukewarm delivery food in an attempt at normalcy. His thoughts surge in isolation and silence and Izuku is desperate not to *think*. But eventually Inko leaves him to sleep with a yawn on her lips and a wobble in her steps.

It’s been a long time since he felt like crawling into bed beside her just to escape the darkness he can feel pulsing in his chest like the beginnings of a black hole. It yawns open wider, void-like and inevitable as the days wear on.

Aizawa runs them hard during training, more so than usual and curled beside Izuku’s anxiety is a looming sense of *guilt*. It’d been eating at him since Aizawa had first brought up the idea of internships, a constant: “but what about Shinsou?” running in the back of his mind that had only amplified after receiving his hero gear. He deserved this opportunity just as much as Izuku did. His quirk, while non-destructive, was powerful. He’d stopped Stain in those final moments where Izuku had failed. Izuku’s certain that he’d be a great ally to have going up against the Shie Hassaikai, he certainly wouldn’t turn down the chance to work alongside him. Maybe that’s why he finds himself telling Shinsou about everything during the short period they have before Aizawa returns with water bottles. He doesn’t tell him

about the raid, keeping the situation vague while still being truthful with his friend. His fingers work wrinkles into the bottom of his shirt, scared of the boy's reaction.

Shinsou lets out a short hum beside him, leaning back against the wall. "S'that why he's been so serious with training recently?"

"I—" Izuku turns to him in confusion. "Yeah—" he finishes lamely, caught off guard by his nonchalant response.

But Shinsou's been friends with the boy long enough to sense the presence of the unasked question: *'You're not mad?'* There's a huff of a laugh from Shinsou when he shakes his head. "I watched that video of you beating *Aizawa* in that simulation training. I'm not there yet."

Izuku's head whips up, eyes wide, brows twisted with something sad, not for himself, but for *Shinsou*. "But your quirk—" Izuku tries, trailing off.

"Can't stop everyone," Shinsou finishes for him. "And I need to be able to defend myself when it can't. That's why I have to get stronger first." He smirks. "Quirks aren't everything, I thought you of all people would understand that best," Shinsou says, bumping shoulders with him before his mood becomes something more somber. "I could barely do anything to stop Stain, even now, after all of Aizawa's training, I wouldn't be able to." He raises his hand, staring at something invisible in his palm before he clenches it tight. He looks back up at Izuku. "Whether we take the same path or not doesn't matter, we're still heading for the same place after all, right?" There's a smile that graces his face, all teeth and determination. "All the way to the hero course," Shinsou reminds him. He raises his fist.

Izuku hesitates only a moment before meeting him halfway. His resolve hardens, determination flaring in kind as they bump fists. "All the way to the hero course," Izuku replies, his grin a blinding thing.

There's a warm hum of friendship in his chest. Izuku gives himself a chance to revel in it as Aizawa returns and they get back to work.

"You've been busier recently," Oboro notes with a smile. "Anything new happen?"

Izuku fidgets in his seat. Aizawa has warned him not to tell anyone about the raid, but surely… If he could keep Piper's secret, he could

keep this.

“I’ve been assigned to a raid operation,” he starts nervously, “for my hero internship. It’s a huge deal, a lot of big heroes are working on it.”

“Does that make you nervous?”

“No, it’s just—”

Oboro gives him a chance to continue.

“Overhaul. It’s a raid operation to catch Overhaul and rescue Eri.”

And there’s surprise on Oboro’s face, a rare sight of confliction. A hushed quiet falls through the room as the man processes the meaning behind the words. “Eri is the little girl you tried to save as Piper, correct?” He asks eventually—like he’s confirming his worst fears.

“I can back out at any time and no one would judge me for it,” Izuku murmurs.

Oboro takes a moment to study him, spying the tension in his shoulders and the anxiety in the twitch of his fingers. “But will you?”

There’s not so much as a contemplative pause from the boy. “No,” Izuku admits, “This was Piper’s last wish. It’s only fitting that I help see it to its end.” A wobbling smile pulls at the boy’s lips as he looks up.

Oboro feels a twinge of guilt in his chest when he sees the look on his face. He sighs, had he known that this was the past that the boy would be facing when Shouta first brought up Piper’s last case, he never would’ve nudged him into the internship. Overhaul was someone that had *killed* the boy once for standing in his way.

“I want to say I’m not scared of him,” Izuku states quietly, “but I am. I still get nightmares. I still dream of that day, *but* …” he trails off, “ *I’m more scared of losing Eri again.* ” And there’s gravity to those words, a weight too crushing for a kid Izuku’s age. “I just—I have to save her. If we fail here it’s over. This is my last chance at fixing things.”

There’s a gentle furrow that settles in Oboro’s brows. “Nothing you’ve done or failed to do is worth needing redemption for,” he states. His voice is gentle even where it’s stern. “You’ve gone through things no kid your age should have to, Midoriya.” He says it like Izuku needs reminding, like he’d somehow forgotten that he’d only just turned 16.

But there's something in his words that sticks with Izuku—that idea of redemption, of atonement.

He makes a jerky nod of his head like he's agreeing with him, like he understands even if he doesn't want to. It does little to ease the furrow in his therapist's brows.

The rest of their session carries on as normal, they return to easier topics and before long their time runs out.

"Stay safe," Oboro tells him, walking the short way towards the door with Izuku. There's a smile pulling at his lips. "And kick their asses for me."

Izuku looks up at him, startled as the man leans over him to push open the door.

The soft light in his eye speaks of a story unsaid—whispering to the boy of a sense of déjà vu for someone other than Izuku—like these words had been spoken to someone before him. "You're gonna be a great hero, Midoriya. Take care of yourself; be selfish with your well being. You deserve it after everything you've suffered."

For as long as the following days seem to drag out, July 30th comes faster than he expects.

In the morning he rises early, staring up at the ceiling, watching the sun paint streaks of light across his posters. His thoughts swirl like the spiral spin of galaxies. He takes a breath, doing what he can to clear his mind but flashes of memories come to him unbidden. Even after so long he can still see the twisted look of fear on Eri's face and the golden glint of Overhaul's mask and the clean cut nails of his hand and the laces of his shoes as Izuku takes his first gasping breath after death. He shakes off the memories, forcing himself out of bed. He gets dressed, eats a big breakfast, and presses a lingering kiss to his mother's hairline as he prepares to head out.

"Be careful!" Inko calls after him.

His smile is soft when he looks back. "I will be."

"Love you, sweetie."

"Love you too, mom."

It's no more than their usual goodbye, but Inko still finds herself holding her cheek in his absence, eyes soft where she doesn't know any better, chest uncomfortably tight where she can sense *something* isn't right.

She fiddles with her hands at the kitchen table, unsure what to do with her sudden unease. Midoriya Inko hasn't prayed in many years, but that morning she bows her head and prays for his safe return.

Reo is waiting for him at the train station. Izuku spots him first, leaned up against the wall, reading something on his phone. The anxious frown on his friend's face is clear.

"You didn't have to meet me," Izuku says once he's close enough.

Reo's head whips up, checking him over, for what Izuku's not sure. Reo's shoulders droop with something like relief. "I wanted to." He sighs, stepping in close to rest a tired head against the Izuku's shoulder, taking a moment just to compose himself. Izuku pulls him into a hug.

Izuku's eyes soften, Reo's presence easing some of the tension in his chest. "Thank you," he murmurs.

Eventually they pull away and he takes Reo's hand in his, squeezing it reassuringly in an attempt to soothe both of their nerves as they wait.

"Let me know when it's over," Reo murmurs.

"I will."

When the train arrives Reo lets their hands fall away from one another. He offers Izuku the same words his mother had. It makes Izuku's stomach churn.

Izuku stares absently out the train window. Everything feels as if it's finally coming full circle. The first person Izuku ever saved had been a little girl, clinging to him in the bathroom hallway of an old convenience store. And now, Red Sun was setting out to do much the same. He'd finish what Piper could not, he'd stand side by side with the people who once stood to see him detained. And at the end of the day he'll return home, to his mother, to Reo.

The void-like loneliness in his chest hums a little louder.

He'll return to the dojo and to school and he'll work his way into the hero course and things will be even better than they are now.

Because they have to be.

Because believing anything besides this will ruin him.

Aizawa has two rings he keeps hidden on a chain around his neck. Izuku doesn't think he's ever noticed it before now. In the wait Izuku finds himself studying all such minute details in the people around him. He notices that Detective Tsukauchi is still wearing his tie despite his bulletproof vest, and he notices the modifications to the guns strapped at Snipe's waist, and he notices that the gold band fitted to Centipeder's mandible oddly matches the one on Nighteye's finger. He keeps himself busy like that. Zipping between hero to student to detective as they're piled into armored vans and other police vehicles. And like the rippling tides of a black hole, Izuku can feel the anxiety swallowing him as the minutes pass. He's running out of things to notice. There's dirt on Aizawa's boot and a stain on Naomasa's collar and a cacophony of thoughts eating away at his resolve, telling him he's not good enough, promising failure where he is not allowed to fail. It's a heavy feeling that settles in his chest—fighting against his lungs. He can't calm the flutter of his heart or the sweat of his palms. But, he'd made a promise to Reo, to himself, that today they would succeed where he had failed in the past.

Aizawa watches him from the corner of his eye, gaze calculative and gauging.

Izuku bores holes into the floor of the van, swaying with each turn they take. His fist clenches in his lap before Aizawa nudges him with a shift of his knee.

"We're here," he murmurs.

The raid begins with the announcement of a warrant, Naomasa at the helm with paper in hand.

That's when all hell breaks loose.

Katsukame Rikiya's profile hadn't prepared Izuku for the sheer size of the villain, lumbering over everyone gathered as he busts through the

front gate, barely missing the detective in the process. Izuku's heart sinks violently when Naomasa gets lost in the chaos, the attack sending several people flying that Aizawa and Fatgum quickly move to catch. Izuku forces himself to move, jumping in to help pull the officers aside once they're back on the ground. He grits his teeth, turning back towards the ongoing fight as Ryukyu shifts, body contorting to a form much bigger than herself to stop the villain's next attack with a clawed-dragon's foot.

"Go!" She commands, voice loud and booming, "My team will handle this!"

He searches the crowd desperately for Naomasa. "Red!" Aizawa shouts, catching his attention, "We're moving!"

Izuku nods, chest tight as he leaves the officer he'd helped to recover in a safe spot before racing after Aizawa. It's easy to fall back into old habits, moving across the battlefield with an ease that comes only from experience. Chaos ensues around them but he does eventually find Naomasa tangled up in the middle of it. The ball of nerves in his chest loosens. He catches the detective's eye as he passes, slowing to push back a villain that moves to stop the man from rejoining their group. Izuku lets another hero handle detaining him as he and Naomasa catch up to the others. Izuku moves ahead to keep stride with Aizawa while the detective falls in next to the other officers accompanying them. They storm the house with an unsettling ease, leaving a trail of heroes and police to deal with the wave of yakuza members that guard the main compound. "This feels too easy!" Fatgum calls. But, Izuku knows, just like everyone else, that even if the hero's right, even if something feels *wrong*, there's nothing they can do now besides push forward. They were in the belly of the beast whose mouth they'd walked willingly into. Things like fear and doubt had no place here.

Nighteye leads their charge alongside Bubble Girl and Centipeder, skidding to a halt in front of an inconspicuous-looking alcove. Izuku takes a steadying breath as Nighteye pushes down on something and with a quiet rumble the entrance to the underground is revealed. There's a small group of villains that rush at them from the staircase leading down, Centipeder and Bubble Girl jumping to subdue them with an efficiency that Izuku doesn't have time to marvel at.

"We'll take care of them!" Bubble Girl calls over her shoulder, criminal pinned beneath her.

Centipeder and Nighteye share a word, a determined glance that tells each other to come back safe before Nighteye surges down the steps, the rest of their group in tow. To Izuku everything feels as if it's happening too fast. He's sprinting towards the gates of hell where Cerberus awaits his return. It's too fast, and yet it's too slow. Time was everything in this situation, if they took too long Overhaul would be able to escape with Eri and everything till now will have been wasted effort.

Nighteye is confident in his navigation through the underground. It isn't long, however, before the hallway dead ends abruptly in front of them, damning in its mere existence. There's a few cries of outrage, confusion. Heads turn toward Nighteye for explanation. In the end, their answer comes from the hero's intern, a third year at UA: Togata Mirio. The teen rips the visor from his head, phasing through the dead end. He comes back moments later, a grim look on his face.

"The wall's thick, but the hall continues on the other side."

Fatgum sneers. "Overhaul's work I'd guess."

Just the thought alone sends a pulse of fear through Izuku; that Overhaul's hands had touched here. That the same hands that had destroyed him had brought to life the wall before them. He'd managed to forget for a moment, in the ongoing chaos, the horror in which they were likely to face. The man with hands that killed and the past that Izuku had abandoned.

Snipe is the first to step forward with a sweep of his vermillion cloak. "Step back," he warns, "I'll get us through."

Nighteye and Mirio are quick to usher the others behind the hero as he raises his gun, taking aim. And what comes out of his gun isn't any kind of bullet Izuku's seen before. It's dart-like where it embeds a needle point into the concrete, three prongs unfolding from the sides to stabilize its grip. There's a soft beep. Snipe turns his face away, motioning for the others to do the same.

A second beep, a third.

Then an explosion.

Heat scorches the back of Izuku's neck as he stumbles forward a step, flashes of the USJ coming back to him where the explosion burns at his scar. A ringing settles in his ears, bits of rubble tumbling around them.

Fatgum waves a hand in front of his face, a cough escaping him. “Give us a better warning, would ya’?”

It takes Izuku longer to shake off the feeling than he’d like.

“When did you even get something like that,” Aizawa asks with a scowl, doing the same before he pulls up his goggles to rub at his eyes.

“After Piper stole my first gun,” Snipe informs them as they turn back to face the crumbling hole in the wall. “Taught me to keep a few eggs in different baskets.”

“We need to keep going,” Nighteye interrupts. He’s the first to climb through to the next hall, Izuku and the others quick to follow. But what they step into is worse than any fun house Izuku’s seen on t.v. The floor rolls beneath them, ceiling and walls rippling like rushing water. They pull in and push out, exposing pipes in the same breath it swallows them.

“There’s no way this is Overhaul’s doing,” someone mutters, “His quirk doesn’t work like this, does it?”

“If it’s quirks,” Izuku starts hesitantly, recalling the files they’d been given, “This is more like Irinaka, isn’t it?

“But the scale of this—” Naomasa grits out, unstable for a moment where there’s another rippling wave in the concrete beneath them.

“Those quirk-enhancing drugs,” Aizawa grunts, taking a protective step closer to Izuku, “You think they’re capable of something to this extent?”

“If they are, we’re in trouble.” Rock Lock slams his hand into the wall, locking their immediate surroundings in place. “We won’t be able to go anywhere like this.”

“Eraser.” Nighteye turns towards the hero. “Can you cancel it out?”

Beside him Aizawa searches their surroundings, finding nothing. “Not unless I can catch sight of his body.”

Mirio steps forward, eyes glinting with some hidden emotion. “I can make it.”

“Lemillion,” Nighteye’s voice is stern yet ineffective as the teen steps past the range of Rock Lock’s quirk.

“They’re doing this to buy time!” Mirio calls, “I won’t let them!” There’s a smile on his face when he casts a last glance over his shoulder at them. To Izuku it’s no more than a barring of teeth as the boy sinks through the wall, disappearing into a labyrinth no one can follow him into.

“Shit!” Izuku’s eyes flicker to where Rock Lock stands. There’s a pained look on his face, every inch of his body tense with strain. “I can’t hold it much longer, he’s fighting it big time,” he warns with a grunt. It’s not long before their surroundings regain their nauseating dance, the floor lurching back into motion beneath them before dropping away entirely.

It’s at most a single-story drop, certainly not enough to kill them. Izuku forces himself into a roll as soon as he hits the floor, knees protesting as dust settles throughout the room. He’s quick in moving to help Naomasa stand, keeping a vigilant watch on their surroundings, straining to see past the clearing dust.

That’s why Izuku’s the first to notice the villains. Naomasa sees the drastic shift in the boy’s demeanor, following his eyeline to the two villains standing opposite them. There’s a flash of recognition when his eyes land on Yū Hojo, a man he’d only ever seen in shotty security footage. And there’s a similar look in the boy’s eyes—like he’s also met this man before, the look backlit by an anger ill-befitting him.

Hojo’s mask is different, Izuku realizes, no longer the beak-like one he’d pulled off after he first stepped out of that alley chasing Eri. He’s dressed the same though, same shirt, same expression. And there’s a burning star of rage that rises up Izuku’s throat upon seeing the man in person. They’d only met once and yet he, in the end, was the reason Izuku was here. He was the reason *any* of them were here. He was the reason Eri was still here, he was the reason Izuku had died, and why he’d been at the USJ, and why Piper was being mourned instead of celebrated. Yū Hojo: the start of it all, the catalyst. The star burns brightly, blinding.

He steps carefully away from Naomasa, unholstering the condensed staff at his side. With a press of a button it extends outwards, ends crackling with a burst of electricity. The noise draws the attention of the others in the room.

Aizawa’s head whips towards him.

A lot has changed since he'd last met Yū Hojo. A lot has changed, and yet, not nearly enough.

Hojo's eyes are cast in dark shadow, hiding the glint of malice. "Overhaul's counting on us to slow you down," he states, "We'll make sure to follow through with his orders."

Behind him, Aizawa's hair rises, eyes flashing red beneath his goggles. "You're outnumbered."

Hojo's stance shifts. "Didn't say we had to beat you."

Izuku, admittedly, doesn't think when he decides to rush forward. Because they don't have time to waste here; because he won't let this man keep Eri from him again. Aizawa keeps his eyes on the villain and Izuku can see the moment Hojo registers his failing quirk.

Hojo takes a step back. "Tabe!"

The second villain: Tabe Soramitsu appears within a moment's notice, faster than Izuku expects, his mouth wide to intercept Izuku's staff where it's already in its downswing. Izuku shifts on his feet, pulling out of the attack, pivoting on his heel to dodge. He spins, a blur of black and green and steel, a burning star of anxiety and rage and cool intellect. He readies another attack.

Then he spots the gun held in Yū Hojo's hands. The sight of it surprises Izuku, he misses a beat, stance faltering, eyes widening. Time seems to slow to a crawl but even then there's nothing he can do to stop what's playing out before him. Because the gun pointed not at him, but *Aizawa*. Hojo's aim is a steady thing, the black of his eyes glittering with a calm pragmatism. And there's a sense of déjà vu in that moment for Izuku, of the USJ, of Aizawa in danger and just out of reach. He can feel it in the skip of his pounding heart, in the nauseating drop of his stomach. But things are different now, even if he feels like he's been sucked into the past. They're not alone here. It isn't Izuku and Aizawa against a looming beast.

This time things were in *their* favor.

A bang splits the air behind them, a bullet ripping through the space beside Izuku to slam into Hojo's gun-welding hand with a precision befitting only Snipe. There's a strangled grunt from the villain, blood splattering against the concrete, weapon clattering against the floor.

Izuku wastes no more time, slamming his staff into Hojo's unguarded

side without an ounce of hesitation; the villain's body jolts with the ensuing crackle of electricity.

Izuku isn't alone anymore. Reo had taught him that; Oboro had reiterated it; the people behind him had proven it.

Relying on others wasn't a sign of weakness here.

"They're sending kids to fight their battles, now?" Hojo pants with a grunt.

"When have you ever cared if your opponents were kids?" Izuku hisses, just loud enough for him to hear.

There's no reaction from the man. He doesn't recognize Izuku.

Tabe jumps for him again and Izuku's quickly pulled back by Aizawa's capture weapon.

"Don't wait for us!" Aizawa shouts to the others, aware that time was against them. Mere minutes could be the difference between rescuing Eri or losing her forever.

Aizawa's weapon pulls back into itself, unraveling from Izuku's waist as the boy rushes forward again. A blur of hardened steel catches the Tabe in the jaw with a resounding *crack*. The villain stumbles back, grabbing at his face before Aizawa's capture weapon takes him by surprise. With his arms pinned to his body, it's easy to knock him out with a quick, final hit from the hero's knee.

"We can't leave without you, Eraser!" Nighteye reminds him, but he's already beginning to usher some of their group through the door. Aizawa grunts, the hero's quirked glare returning to the remaining villain just in time to erase the crystals blooming across his skin. He couldn't leave the kid. He needed to leave. The kid didn't look like he had any plans on stopping. There's a barely suppressed growl in his throat. "Red," it's a warning. But by the time the name is out of his mouth, it's already over.

Yū Hojo is unconscious at the boy's feet.

It doesn't bring Izuku as much comfort as he thought it would.

Aizawa watches as he numbly pulls the man's hands behind his back, cuffing them together. "They should both be out for a while," Izuku informs him, "Let's go."

Aizawa sticks close to Izuku as they run, whether because of the stunt he'd pulled in the last room or because of a general sense of duty for his somehow-intern. Either way Izuku can tell he's regretting bringing Izuku somewhere as dangerous as this.

"He's slinking through the walls," Aizawa informs everyone as they go, "I managed to catch a glimpse of him retreating when we first fell, but it wasn't enough."

"Even if he's on quirk enhancers he's unlikely to have control over the entirety of the basement," Izuku mutters in response, "He let us get this far without any more obstacles. There's gotta be a limit to it."

Nighteye slows his pace, falling into step beside them. "Which means he's either looking for us, or he's busy elsewhere."

Izuku's eyes flicker to the hero before returning to Aizawa. "You said you saw him retreating," Izuku puts out, "does that mean he has to expose himself to be able to see us? If that's the case then any time he's manipulating something around us that means his actual body must be nearby watching us."

Aizawa nods curtly, confirming Izuku's theory. And maybe it's because he still has his eyes set on the hero that he's the first to notice the abnormality of the wall beside them before it bursts to life. A living mass of concrete brakes from the wall, straight toward their clustered group.

There's no time for Izuku to save them all and Oboro's reminder sounds far off so far underground—so he does the only thing he can.

He trips Aizawa.

With a mindless sweep of his staff, he sends the hero into a painful collision course with the floor. And where the living pillar breezes safely over Aizawa's head, it catches Izuku and Nighteye, throwing them back into a hole yawning open on the wall opposite. Aizawa rolls over, capture weapon whipping out towards him, desperation hidden behind the slits of his goggles. " *Red!* "

It barely manages to brush Izuku's side before the wall closes and they're cast into darkness, severing the connection.

Oboro had told him to be selfish with his well-being, but Izuku has

never been a selfish person. He was smart, calculative, and kind before all else. Perhaps that would be his ultimate downfall.

Chapter End Notes

HO HO HO MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS! I didn't have plans on posting this today but here we are! Izuku says his goodbyes and the raid begins with only four more chapters left till the end! I hope everyone enjoyed the chapter! I hit a bit of a breakthrough on the next few chapters so hopefully there won't be as long of a wait for the next chapter! Thank you to everyone for their support I hope this made your day even just a little bit better, consider this my gift from me to you :)

Until next time!

Perihelion

Chapter Summary

After a talk with old friends and a meeting with his therapist, Izuku says goodbye to Inko and Reo and sets out on his first mission with the heroes— the raid on the Shie Hassasaki. Nighteye leads their charge into the underground but it's not long before their path oss blocked by villains. Most of whom Izuku's never met before, one of which he has. Lemillion charges forward without them and the race against time continues.

—

He trips Aizawa.

With a mindless sweep of his staff he sends the hero into a painful collision course with the floor. And where the living pillar breezes safely over Aizawa's head, it catches Izuku and Nighteye, throwing them back into a hole yawning open on the wall opposite. Aizawa rolls over, capture weapon whipping out towards him, desperation hidden behind the slits of his goggles.

"Red!"

It barely manages to brush Izuku's side before the wall closes and they're cast into darkness, severing the connection.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart!

kittukyutu

echonova x

kore-arts

anidiotbuiltlikeelmersglue x

doodle

sorrel x x x

Aizawa's eyes widen at the severed end of his capture weapon, cursing loudly. Naomasa pulls him back where he moves to slam his foot fruitlessly into the wall. "He's not alone," the detective reminds him,

anxiety forming a lump in his throat. “If he couldn’t hold his own you wouldn’t’ve brought him here,” Naomasa grits out, just as scared as Aizawa is, just as terrified that they’ll lose him.

Aizawa turns away from the wall Midoriya had disappeared into, eyes narrowed, furiously scanning their surroundings for any sign of Irinaka’s main body. He shouldn’t have brought him. Even if Midoriya could beat him it wasn’t enough to be here. *He shouldn’t have brought him*—he’d been blind, unconsciously drawing comparisons between the boy and Piper, mistaking one for the other.

He curses himself, frustrated, *angry*. Piper was dead. *Piper was dead.* Why couldn’t he remember that? Why couldn’t he remember he’d *failed.* Didn’t he at least owe that child that much? Midoriya had been dragged into the middle of a battlefield and Aizawa had been the one to do it.

There’s no time to berate himself any further as more waves start up along the walls and ceiling, the floor buckling up beneath them before falling away, moving beneath their feet. But, there’s something different about this time when compared to the rest—like the walls are moving slower than they had. Rock Lock curses under his breath, “He got Nighteye too, some leader he is leaving us here.” His hand immediately finds a wall, wrist twisting to activate his quirk. “Don’t complain about the tight quarters!”

It’s not too far a tumble, still painful for sure, but it’s not long before both Izuku and Nighteye are back on their feet.

“You tripped him on purpose, didn’t you?” Nighteye grunts, dusting off his suit sleeve.

“He was targeting Eraser,” Izuku coughs, pushing himself up. “Until those drugs wear off he’s the only one who has a chance at stopping Irinaka.” He glances at their surroundings. They’ve been spit into another hall, nearly identical to the last.

“It was good thinking.”

Izuku wants to scoff as he retrieves his staff from the ground, body aching like a fresh bruise from their tumble. “There really wasn’t any thinking involved in it.”

“Even so—” Nighteye takes his own look around the area, there’s a four-way intersection just ahead of them but nothing more to signal

where they might've been dropped. "It's likely Irinaka won't be back for us since he failed to separate Eraser—."

Izuku takes a stumbling step towards the wall, vision wavering suddenly. Beside him, Nighteye does much the same. Izuku pinches his eyes shut in an attempt to ride out the wave of nausea that hits him.

There's a drunken laugh from a little way down the hall, echoing from above them.

"Feelin' tipsy?" there's a hiccup, "Or are ya' completely blasted already?!"

Izuku squints up at the villain through his blurring vision, recognizing the quirk if nothing else. Sasaki Deidoro, quirk: *Sloshed.* There's another bark of laughter from him, loud and obnoxious. Izuku pushes away from the wall, leaning against his staff to keep himself upright.

When he blinks there's a second person wavering in his vision, dressed like a plague doctor might've in medieval times. He's also holding a gun.

Izuku takes a long, slow blink before he fumbles for one of the smoke bombs at his waist, pulling the pin out with a sloppy flick of his thumb. The effect is immediate.

The hallway floods with green smoke as Izuku takes one stumbling step toward Nighteye and drags them both gracelessly to the floor as a few rounds of gunfire go off.

There's another laugh from Sasaki. "He s're got you!"

"Shut up, will you?" There's a shattering of glass from somewhere up ahead.

Izuku turns his head to Nighteye, unsure where to go from here but knowing they can't stay on the ground.

"Where are you!" The newcomer barks.

The words come out without his consent. "Down here," Izuku blurts out.

Beside him, Nighteye replies as well. "On the floor."

Izuku doesn't get a chance to even process his confusion before

there's ensuing gunfire and he forces himself out of the way. He rolls to the side, fighting back another wave of nausea as he stares up at the ceiling, clutching at the floor. The smoke wouldn't last forever.

There's a long stretch of silence after the gunfire, interrupted only by the occasional hiccup from Sasaki.

"You'll fail here," Nemoto calls, "Did you know that?"

To Izuku's right comes another involuntary answer from Nighteye. "Yes." Izuku's head whips towards the sound of his voice, unable to see him through the haze. There's another gunshot, bullet cracking against concrete.

Nemoto Shin. The name comes to him suddenly. Quirk: *Confession.*

The name of his quirk implies its function, but did the hero really believe that? Izuku frowns, slowly rolling onto his stomach and pushing himself up on unsteady limbs. This was a bad situation to be in, sure, but even so, Izuku finds his voice: "Failure isn't an option."

He throws himself to the side again, rolling to his knees. Another bullet ricochets against concrete.

"Isn't it?" Nemoto asks.

And Izuku can feel the man's quirk worming at his thoughts, seeking only the darkest truths. But Izuku is convicted if nothing else. "No." Failure here was an unacceptable outcome. There's a shadow of Nighteye within the green, barely visible even with their proximity.

"Tell me, *hero,"* Nemoto tries again, "why is it you're really here?" His quirk wasn't the type meant for combat, but he knew how to use it to his advantage.

Izuku fights desperately against the worming urge, but the answer burrows its way out of his throat regardless, spoken from a vigilante that's long since been dead. "Redemption," he chokes out. It's the same word Oboro had used, the same thing Oboro said he didn't need. There could be any number of implications from the word in the face of the villain.

"Redemption," Nemoto scoffs, "Not even here to save the girl? To kill us? Arrest us? Rather selfish, isn't it?"

"That's right," Izuku grunts, stumbling to the side as another shot

rings out.

Izuku can see the game Nemoto is playing, can deduce the way in which he leads the conversation. Heroes were supposed to be good, morally upright, *strong.* But, heroes are human. *Izuku is human.* Nemoto uses it as a weakness.

“First time being honest with yourself?” Nemoto asks and there’s no power behind these words, but there is behind the next. “Cocky *and* selfish. Wouldn’t you agree?” But the question isn’t directed at Izuku. There’s no worming urge lodged in his throat.

Instead, Nighteye answers. “Yes.”

And there’s a pang somewhere in Izuku’s chest in response. It’s heavy against his lungs, a familiar feeling of upset—self-hatred— *guilt* .

“Redemption is a disappointing answer for a hero, isn’t it?”

“It is,” Nighteye grunts.

Izuku’s head turns to find Nighteye’s shadow in the smoke. His vision wavers with Sasaki’s quirk. It’s hard to stay upright. His limbs feel weak, nausea crawling up his throat in the absence of Nemoto’s power. He finds the wall with his hand, leaning against it for support. Nemoto’s playing the long haul for the moment.

There’s a flicker of dying starlight, barely-there-stars consumed by the empty void of space. There is truth packed behind the hero’s words, but Izuku’s heard worse from people he was closer to.

The smoke thins, sinking closer to the floor, dispersing. Izuku and Nighteye lose their cover, but so does their enemy.

A small, oddly shaped projectile cuts a clean path through the clearing smoke, slamming ruthlessly into Nemoto’s cheek. The villain stumbles, clutching a broken jaw. Another one takes him in the temple; he crumples to the floor. Nighteye stands to the left of Izuku, brows furrowed with intense concentration where the boy can tell his vision is wavering. Above them, Sasaki is still clinging to the pipes lining the ceiling. “Damn,” he slurs, “Finally made ‘em shut up, huh.”

Izuku grits his teeth, swallowing his nausea. He’d carried Aizawa out of the USJ in a worse state. He pushes himself away from the wall, rushing at the remaining villain, steps still unsteady where his path forward isn’t entirely straight. His attack is uncoordinated, but so is

his opponent.

He swings the end of his staff up at the villain as he makes to dodge. Electricity crackles where it comes into contact with him. His body tenses, falling away as Izuku takes a step back. A third weighted projectile slams into the man's face as he falls. He can feel the effects of his quirk flooding out of him as Sasaki hits the floor, unconscious. Izuku straightens himself, blinking away the last of his blurring vision until only an uneasy feeling remains trapped in his stomach. He doesn't turn to look back at Nighteye. "Do you still know the way?"

The hero doesn't comment on their words from before, neither does Izuku. It would only be empty reassurances. "I'll need to regather our bearings, but I have a guess as to where we are—"

Irinaka's quirk is getting weaker, Aizawa can tell. His attacks are becoming less coordinated, weaker after only a few minutes. He's making risky moves. He's becoming desperate. It's obvious the drugs are starting to wear off, even so, it's not quick enough.

"Any sight of him?!" Fatgum asks with a shout, taking the brunt of a blow meant for Tamaki.

"Not yet!" Aizawa calls back, dodging out of the way of a rising patch of concrete. He scans the ceiling and walls of the gaping cavern they'd been tossed into, searching for any sign of the man. All it'd take is a brief glance, a momentary loss of control to bring Irinaka out. Aizawa grits his teeth, eyes painfully dry.

There's a curse from Rock Lock as a pillar of concrete shoots out from the wall, raking his side. "Damn yakuza!" he spits.

Behind Aizawa, Naomasa grits his teeth, weapon drawn. They're all struggling to deal with the villain's quirk— ill-equipped and ill-prepared to handle something of this magnitude. Aizawa was supposed to be their catch-all. Where strength failed Erasure was meant to cover the rest of their bases. But Irinaka was an opponent he couldn't see, couldn't counter. His eyes search the ceiling desperately, looking for an opening, an opportunity.

Irinaka won't be able to hold out much longer. It's inevitable that he'll slip up, but the villains from before had made it clear. None of them had to win. They didn't *have* to beat the heroes. They just needed to stall them long enough to give Overhaul a chance to escape.

Rock Lock's rant continues, even as he ducks under a spike of concrete, "Don't know how to do anything besides hide!"

There's a snarl, barely audible in the chaos around them, but Naomasa picks up on it anyway. His head jerks towards the noise, scanning the ceiling, cast in shadow as it is. The detective shifts back a step, nudging Aizawa. He too gives the area a brief scan, finding nothing.

The time they've been stuck here stretches out before them mockingly. Every second here counts. Every minute could come at the cost of someone's life.

"Bygone assholes!" Rock Lock shouts again, pressing a hand to his side with a hiss. There's another growl that drips from the ceiling.

Aizawa's gaze snaps towards the area, honing in on a shadow of something he can't quite see. "Snipe!" Aizawa barks, catching the other hero's attention as another attack is sent their way. He jumps back, pulling Naomasa out of the way with a flick of his capture weapon.

Snipe fights his way toward them, catching Rock Lock with one arm as he's thrown a few feet back by a similar attack. Snipe stumbles under the weight of the man, grunting from the strain.

"Come out, coward!" Rock Lock yells, righting himself.

"Above us!" Aizawa barks again. There's no time. He could move if they're not quick. "The ceiling! Blow it apart!"

Snipe doesn't hesitate, aim swinging high following Aizawa's finger. There's no specific target, but Aizawa seems convinced he won't need one. With a ringing *bang,* he fires at the ceiling, bullet latching into concrete. Snipe shields his face with a raised arm. Rock Lock curses at his side, scrambling out of the way.

An explosion rocks the room, knocking Naomasa off his feet. Rubble raining from above them and a thin, smokey dust filling the air, coating their lungs. Aizawa squints past the haze, eyes burning. "There!" Aizawa coughs. His eyes glow a brilliant red, hair rising up from his shoulders. At long last he catches sight of Irinaka, his body half exposed from the explosion, clearly dazed. "I've got him in sight!" Aizawa shouts. His capture weapon whips up toward the villain, preparing to rip him away from the ceiling. His eyes burn from the dust, but he keeps them trained on the villain. "Fatgum!"

The other hero rushes in as Aizawa yanks Irinaka free, caught in Fatgum's cushioned belly before he can make a graceless landing.

Naomasa stumbles to his feet to his left, shaking dust from his hair. He doesn't waste time, marching towards the villain as he fumbles with the quirk-suppressing cuffs at his hip. He slaps them on the villain's wrists, tightening them. He casts Aizawa a furtive glance and the hero finally blinks. He drops his guard for the moment, letting the others handle Irinaka as he recovers. He rubs at his eyes with a frown as one of the officers begins reciting the villain his rights.

"You alright?" Snipe asks, approaching from behind.

"Fine," Aizawa grunts, pulling out his eye drops, blinking away the excess.

"We wasted enough time with Irinaka," Naoamasa states, stepping back toward the group. "We need to think about splitting up from here," he continues, looking around at the mess of a cavern the villain had left them with. "There's no way to tell which way we came from, let alone which way we need to go."

"Splitting up could be dangerous," Rock Lock grunts, checking his side for blood and finding only a tear in his suit and darkening bruise.

"This raid is dangerous," Aizawa retorts, taking another look at their surroundings. "We knew what we're getting into when we agreed to participate."

Rock Lock scowls. "Splitting up won't do anything but make us easier targets."

Aizawa's dark eyes return to the hero, a barely suppressed glint of red hidden there. "We don't have time to run around down here, splitting up gives us a better chance at finding Overhaul and the girl."

"There's no point in finding Overhaul if we can't beat him," Rock Lock retorts.

Fatgum shakes his head, rejoining the group, followed closely by a nervous looking Tamaki. "The detective's right and so is Eraser," he cuts in, "Movin' together will take time we don't have." He looks between them. "How should we split?"

And with no time to argue it's not long before they've divided themselves into groups, some more begrudgingly than others. "That'll

leave you two alone," Fatgum warns, looking between Aizawa and Naomasa.

"We'll be fine," the detective reassures. "With Irinaka out of the game there shouldn't be any quirks Eraser can't counteract."

Rock Lock scoffs, "That's what we thought heading in here too. If they get the jump on you it's over, you realize that, right?"

"I'm aware," Aizawa mutters, turning away. It's a dangerous game they're playing, but it's been dangerous from the start. He'd made a mistake, bringing Midoriya here. But regret won't change what's already happened. He squares his shoulders, sending a final, wary glance at where Irinaka's being guarded, quirk-suppressing cuffs locked tightly around his wrists.

"Ready?" Naomasa asks from beside him, voice low.

He nods.

The detective copies the motion, turning back to the others. "Good luck everyone," he offers solemnly. There's a chorus of similar responses as Aizawa takes the lead and the rest of the group splits off.

It's harder for Naomasa to keep pace with the hero, but he manages, just barely. Everything for Eri's sake, for Piper's. He's not sure how long they go for before they find their first signs of a fight since splitting.

They freeze at the sight of the unconscious bodies in the corridor. Naomasa approaches carefully, nudging one of them with a foot. When there's no response he bends now, pulling both of their masks off. "Nemoto and Sasaki…" he trails off, looking towards Aizawa, "Do you think this was Nighteye and Midoriya?" He tries to keep the spark of hope from his voice.

"It's Red Sun," Aizawa reminds him with a glance. "And I'd suggest Lemillion, but that bruise looks like something Nighteye would leave." All together they count a total of three angry red marks on the villains' faces—small concentrated bruising.

"We didn't pass them so they must've gone this way, right?" Naomasa murmurs, glancing down the hall, "If Nighteye's got this place memorized like I think he does then we must be going the right way."

“If we move fast enough we might be able to catch up with them.” Aizawa turns to the detective. “Will you be able to keep up?”

Naomasa gives him a determined nod. “I’ll have to.”

They wander the halls at a jog, Nighteye seems to know where he’s going and there’s little Izuku can do besides follow behind. The hero was right in his theory about Irinaka not coming back for them. But it worries Izuku to know he’s still trailing the rest of their group.

They were shedding allies at a rate that only Izuku seemed to be wary of. The main group was down to only four licensed heroes now, a hero student, and a handful of police armed with only the guns at their waists. And that was only if none of the others had been separated.

He’s not sure how long they run, how many minutes are wasted in pursuit of an unknown destination. The heavy *thud, thud, thud* of his boots falls in time with the pounding of his heart.

And there, after what seems like hours, is the sound of shouting, barely audible from where they are. They can’t make out any words, but it’s clear that some sort of fight is going on nearby.

Izuku’s eyes widen; they pick up the pace. “That’s gotta be the others, right?” he asks nervously, feet pounding the concrete in time with Nighteye’s.

The hero reaches a hand out, grabbing Izuku’s shoulder as they run. He doesn’t slow. “It’s Lemillion and Overhaul,” he says after a moment, voice dark, tone *sure*.

Fear strikes Izuku like lightning, a song of terror older than the universe echoing through his core. The black hole wanes open, dangerous where Izuku can feel its gravity trying to pull him back. He keeps his pace; hardens his resolve. He hadn’t expected to see Overhaul here. Even knowing what this mission was for; even knowing who he was up against. Izuku was just an intern— barely that. His anxieties had told him he would die again at Overhaul's hands. But logic whispered he’d barely need to fight because he wasn’t Piper here. He was just a boy with a hero name he’d yet to grow into.

Red Sun.

Reo had told him red giants were stars nearing the end of their life. Large and bright and rapidly burning through what little is left of

their fuel, doomed to die out in a single, violent supernova. It'd been one of their late night talks, one where Izuku did very little of the talking. The name Red Sun feels fitting in that moment, where he can feel the beginnings of that collapsing star. The fear he feels— the terror. A push and a pull. Rage and horror and everything in between because, despite the odds, the logic that claimed he would not find Overhaul here had made itself a liar.

The wall in front of them explodes outwards, a large, jagged spike of earth piercing through the hall. Nighteye yanks him back by the collar, pulling him out of its path. Izuku pants, heart pounding wildly as the spike retracts itself, leaving in its wake rubble and dust and a gaping hole into what can only be described as a battlefield. There's the sound of voices from inside, shouts, words clear now that they're so close.

Overhaul's voice.

Izuku hasn't heard it since the night he died. One encounter was all it took to engrain it in his memory.

In his chest, Izuku's heart continues to pound, reminding him that this is real, that he's alive, that he has to keep it that way.

Nighteye leaps through first, Izuku soon after him, just in time to see Lemillion fling who looks like Chronos into Overhaul. They knock heads and Overhaul's mask does little to prevent his nose from breaking beneath the force of the collision. He staggers back, ungloved hand holding onto his mask, clutching at his face as Chronos slumps to the floor. Overhaul's glare is a deadly thing. It's more than enough to root Izuku in his steps.

Nighteye is the first of them to make his presence known, high-density stamp slamming brutally into Overhaul's cheek, giving him little time to recover in the wake of Lemillion's attack. The villain stumbles to the side, the ground spiking out around him in a near-automated form of defense.

Part of Izuku wants to cower and flee, to run and never stop running. But his eyes catch on Lemillion— on the child behind him. And something curious takes place in that moment, time slowing as Nighteye rushes forward, as Lemillion spreads his arms wider, beaten and bloodied but still standing.

There is Eri, her cherry red eyes widened in horror, cape draped over her shoulders, arms and legs still bandaged, dress rattier than it had

been, hair longer than he remembers. But he couldn't forget that face, that expression wrought with fear.

Overhaul rushes for the hero. *"Eri!"* he shouts, rough voice ringing through the room like a command, "Don't you remember what happened to the last person that tried to *'save'* you?!"

"Get the girl out of here!" Nighteye yells, dodging past a spike that Overhaul sends the hero's way.

Izuku's finger twitches, the same one Overhaul had once brushed against and something inside him *ignites. Izuku obeys.* He obeys and he defies the laws of gravity holding him still, defies the fear burning in his chest, defies the cold claws of death at his heels and at his throat and standing before him as it shouts that *Eri* is the reason *Death kills*. Izuku rushes forward without a second thought, vaulting over stagnant spikes of rock, ducking under newly forming ones. His teeth are grit, muscles wound tight. His goal becomes a singularity of white and vermillion. Overhaul's voice is lost in the tide of the universe roaring in Izuku's ears.

"Eri," in his own ears Izuku's voice doesn't sound above a whisper, but he's certain it must be louder as her head snaps towards him. He arrives at her side within moments, crouching before her, blocking her view of Overhaul. Lemillion puts himself between them and the villain, another layer of defense. "I need to protect you, okay?" He holds a hand out to her, gentle, kind. Desperation claws at his throat, sun blazing in his chest, burning his lungs. Because Eri is back in front of him. Because she is still hurt. Because she still needs saving.

He watches her eyes flash with something strange before the terror seeps back in with a flicker of a memory. "He'll kill you too," she whispers, barely loud enough to hear.

"He won't." Determination keeps his voice level, *sure.*

In her eyes there is worry, hope, desperation. She lifts her arm, hesitant to start before a single, small hand reaches out to meet his.

That's all he needs.

"My name is Red," he tells Eri, gently pulling her into his arms. There is chaos behind him, loud screams of defiance from Overhaul that threaten to draw Eri's attention. "Your name's Eri, right?" he murmurs. Red eyes meet green. He smiles. "Let's get you out of here."

Chapter End Notes

It's been a long time since Izuku first saw Eri, desperate to be saved, desperate to prevent someone else from dying because of her. Her first appearance was chapter 13, and now, after years of waiting, she makes her return in chapter 66, just in time for Piper's finale.
This fic has been a long time in the making but with only three chapters left we're finally beginning to draw to a close and I'm excited for everyone to see it to its end :) Thank you for all your continued support, I hope you enjoyed the chapter!

Until next time

Pillars of Creation

Chapter Summary

The fight against Overhaul continues.

Chapter Notes

tw:// mentions of death

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fanart!!

blackholeca

fretful-ferret x x x x

skeleton-forest x

succulentreptilerat

imlazytrash x x

nosayiwillcry x

carmelchocola

sorrel x x x x

echonova x x

egbert x

Izuku pulls Eri close to his chest, gently pressing her head into the crook of his shoulder. “I need to protect you, okay?” he murmurs, “Try not to let go.”

He darts into the mess of spiked pillars without a second thought, doing his best to keep the two of them out of sight as he makes his way closer to the exit. His heart thunders in his chest as they take shelter behind an outcropping of rock. He presses his back into the stone, listening to the ongoing fight. The hole they’d crawled in through is still a good thirty feet away, but if Nighteye and Lemillion can distract Overhaul for long enough they’ll be able to make it. If he

can find the other heroes, find Aizawa, then their win here will be guaranteed.

Izuku holds Eri tighter, giving himself a moment to breathe before he takes off again. There's more shouting from behind him as Lemillion's tossed in their direction, half phasing through the floor in an attempt to slow his momentum.

Izuku's quick to find shelter again. Overhaul had likely forgotten about the exit he'd carved through the wall for now, but if the villain thinks for even a moment that they could use it to escape with Eri he'd undoubtedly seal it again.

Lemillion rushes back into the fight, landing a solid kick in Overhaul's side with assistance from Nighteye.

Another few moments and he could try again for the exit. Izuku's gaze trails up to the way out, surprised when he finds two figures framed by the crumbling hole in the wall, familiar in all the best ways. Something hopeful flutters in his chest at the sight of Aizawa and Naomasa, looking for any of the others behind them, finding none.

"Red!" Aizawa barks wasting no time in leaping down, Naomasa hot on his trail. The shout, unfortunately, garners Overhaul's attention.

Izuku can see from the corner of his eye when Overhaul slams a hand into the ground next to Chronos' body. A single spike erupts from the ground before stalling only a foot into its journey, dwarfed by those surrounding it. Aizawa's eyes burn a brilliant red as he streaks past Izuku, headed straight toward the villain.

There's a furious growl from Overhaul: *"ERASER!"*

Naomasa reaches Izuku soon after, trying to pull him towards the opening into the hall. "Come on, kid!" But Izuku hesitates, watching Aizawa and Nighteye as they coordinate an attack against Overhaul. This could be it after all. This could be the end of the chapter he'd left unwritten. This could be the conclusion of everything Piper had worked for.

With Eri in his arms and Overhaul on the ropes.

This could be his epilogue.

There's a streak of white that whips out from beside Overhaul, and at first, Izuku thinks it's Aizawa's capture weapon. But, it's arrow-like,

bursting not from around the hero's neck but instead from the cover of Chronos' hood. Aizawa doesn't have enough time to dodge, barely managing to avoid the attack where it grazes past his cheek, drawing a thin stripe of blood as Chronos pushes himself up on shaking limbs.

"Those hit by the minute hand—" he mutters, "must slow *down."*

Izuku and Naomasa shout his name in unison as the hero's stride stutters: *"Eraser!"*

The detective rushes forward, weapon drawn. Chronos pauses, hair hovering around his head in the shape of pointed arrows. Aizawa tries to look back at Naomasa, head inching towards him in minuscule increments as he fights against the effects of the villain's quirk.

Naomasa throws a furtive glance his way.

This is all it takes for the villain to take his chance, arrow-tipped hair whipping towards him. Naomasa fires the gun without hesitation, catching the man in the shoulder and sending him back with a cry of pain, hair falling uselessly back around his face.

Overhaul regains quick control of his quirk as Aizawa's eyes fall off him, sending spiked pillars toward Nighteye and Lemillion, forcing them to retreat back. They keep him distracted as Naomasa rushes to help Aizawa.

"Come on, Eraser," Naomasa grunts, slinging the man's arm around his neck, taking the brunt of his weight as he drags him away from the fight.

"Eraser!" Nighteye bellows. He sends another high-density stamp flying towards Overhaul. It clips the edge of a newly forming spike that the villain raises instead, sending out a shower of rock and dust.

Naomasa settles Aizawa up against one of the pillars, reaching over to carefully peel one of Aizawa's eyelids open. Overhaul's next attack fails as the hero's eye burns a brilliant red. He takes a hard punch from Lemillion in the process, knocking the mask from his face.

Beneath it, he is no more than a man, his face twisted with rage and rapid bruising. There's blood trickling from his nose, from his cheek, from a gash above his brow. There is fury in his eyes, the likes of which sends a spark of terror through Izuku as he looks on.

He cannot fight with the girl in his arms, cannot afford to put her in

danger. He takes a careful step back, closer to the exit. He takes another, and another. He should've left when Naomasa told him to.

He wants to see the end of Overhaul, now that he's here, now that he's this close. But Eri is still in danger.

For now, this is enough.

Eri is enough.

Movement comes back to Aizawa slowly, too slowly for such a fight and it's not long before Naomasa's grip on his eyelid slips with a loud curse.

Overhaul's eyes are drawn to the detective, to Izuku who spins and races towards the exit, to Eri who's clutched securely in his arms.

The hole in the wall reseals itself before Izuku can reach it, rock smoothing over as if it had never existed to begin with. The boy skids to a halt with dawning horror.

"None of you will leave here alive," Overhaul snarls. He swipes at the blood beneath his nose with a scowl. It's a threat, a promise that Izuku can feel deep within his marrow as he turns slowly to face the villain that'd once killed him.

To the villain's right, Chronos keeps a careful hand pressed against his shoulder, expression marred with a pained scowl as he leans against a pillar for support. He's shaking too much to keep steady for long. Pain and blood loss send a tremor through his limbs.

Overhaul casts a quick glare back at him. "Make yourself useful, Chrono." He tosses a case of something at Chronos who catches it with a hiss of pain before Overhaul's power spreads through the ground, the terrain smooths out around them momentarily before it explodes again. Knife-sharp spikes of earth burst from the floor; shouts go up. Izuku throws himself back with a curse when one shoots up less than a foot in front of him.

Naomasa struggles to help Aizawa back to his feet as the effects of the villain's quirk wears off. They don't see the newly loaded gun Chronos carefully levels at them.

"Do us a favor," the man grunts, "and test our latest formula."

He doesn't have to be a steady shot to hit a sitting target.

Izuku's eyes widen, arms tightening around Eri as a shout rips through his throat: *"Detective!"*

Izuku won't reach them in time, can't jeopardize the girl in his arms. He runs forward anyways. His desperation crescendos.

The gun goes off just as Lemillion throws himself between Chronos and the others, boots skidding across the ground as he slides to a halt, cape fluttering out behind him, dust kicking up around his feet. His arms are spread wide to cover more area, to protect Aizawa at all costs. Aizawa—the only one with a chance of stopping Overhaul's quirk.

Eri flinches at the sound of the gun firing, clinging to him tighter. Soft reassurances lodge themselves in his throat as he finds cover to duck behind. His heart pounds heavy in his esophagus—pulse a living thing with a mind of its own.

Lemillion takes the dart-like bullet with a grunt. Nighteye is yelling something; Aizawa is still seconds too slow to have any sort of meaningful reaction.

Izuku bites at the inside of his cheek. He chances a peek towards Lemillion just in time to see him pull the dart from his shoulder, discarding it amongst the uneven terrain. He takes a confident step forward before faltering, looking down at himself in confusion. He raises his hands, turning them over.

There's a laugh from Overhaul at the sight, breathless, relieved. "Eri will help us cure the disease that has spread through hero society!" he pants, "This is… just the beginning…"

"My quirk's gone!" Lemillion warns with a shout, eyes wide before he clenches his fists, determination settling like a fire under his skin as he gets a running start for Chronos.

Izuku, in turn, feels something cold seep into his chest, something bottomless, something *heavy*. They hadn't prepared for something like this—bullets that could disable one's quirk. Was it permanent? Temporary? Either way, they can't afford for Aizawa's quirk to fail here for even a moment.

"The power of the girl you're trying to save…" Overhaul shouts, "will rob you of everything you've worked so hard to achieve! It will reduce this world to nothing!"

Izuku feels useless here, even with the girl in his arms. What has he done? What can he do?

Eri shivers in his hold and Izuku glances down at her. Eri's power gave her the ability to reverse time on someone, she'd healed Izuku's wounds that way all those months ago, reopening old ones in their stead. The heroes had theorized that the Shie Hassaikai had been using her for those healing abilities. But what Overhaul was saying… it seems like it was far more than that.

A blunt pillar slams into Lemillion from the side, throwing him towards Nighteye. The hero just manages to catch him, eyes going wide behind his glasses as a wall bursts from the floor with a deafening rumble, sealing them off from the rest of the group.

They can just hear shouting from the other side, barely audible through the rock.

Naomasa twists Aizawa around, shielding the hero with his body as a second shot goes off. A dart slams into Naomasa's back.

"Eraserhead!" Overhaul barks viciously from across the room, *"You have to hit Eraserhead!"*

Aizawa's capture weapon whips out in time with the words, yanking the gun from Chronos' hold before it can be used again. The hero drags himself away from Naomasa, eyes a glaring red, hair half risen around his shoulders. His eyes remain steady on Overhaul, preventing another wave of spiked terrain, but his capture weapon sweeps around Chronos, pulling the startled villain towards the hero as he drives a knee straight into his face. There's a sharp crack as Chronos collapses, making no move to get back up.

With Aizawa back in the fray, Izuku rushes towards Naomasa, crouching next to him as the man pulls the dart from the padding of his vest, unharmed. A breath Izuku hadn't realized he'd been holding escapes him. "You're alright then?" Izuku asks warily, casting a glance over his shoulder at the ongoing fight.

The fight has only just begun and Aizawa isn't anywhere near losing, but he won't be able to keep his eyes on Overhaul forever. It's a split-second decision that has Izuku shifting Eri in his hold, preparing to pass her over to Naomasa, resolve hardening in his eyes. Eri clings to him a little tighter. "He's safe," Izuku reassures her, "He'll protect you." She looks up at him, cherry eyes swirling with reluctance—fear—and the last thing he wants to do is let go after he'd spent so long

tracking her down. But her fingers uncurl slowly from his vest; she offers him a barely-there nod. His attention returns to Naomasa. “Take her,” he murmurs, and the irony of the situation doesn’t escape him. Piper had once entrusted Eri’s case with the man kneeling before him, the same man that now takes the girl into his arms with an amount of care even Piper had never borne witness to. It’s a mixture of worry, a strained relief.

“But–”

“Find somewhere to hide,” Izuku instructs, casting another backward glance at Aizawa. “Eraser won’t be able to hold him off forever, not alone.”

Naomasa looks like he wants to argue, even with the girl already in his arms. Because Izuku is only a teenager, one that shouldn’t be expected to face off against a villain the likes of Overhaul— not like Piper had. But they’ve been cut off from Nighteye and Lemillion, and Aizawa is fighting alone, and out of the two of them, Izuku is better suited to take on this fight. Even though he shouldn’t have to—even though he’s just a kid.

Naomasa nods, tucking Eri closer to his chest. “Be safe.” There’s a glint of a promise in their eyes, emerald and dark obsidian, both hardened with resolve, both prepared to make a liar of the man who’d said they’d die here.

Izuku rises, staff settling in his palm, extending out in preparation of what was to come. He doubts Reo would be happy with the current situation. Because Izuku was about to face Eri’s captor, his killer. And he’s scared, like anyone would be, but he’s angry too. Angry at the man who had stolen Eri’s childhood; who had killed him, leaving scars that could be observed but not seen.

In his chest a red eye burns like a blazing sun—Piper who was dead—Piper who had never quite died.

Overhaul casts a frenzied fistful of dirt at Aizawa’s face, expression twisted with disgust. The hero stumbles back, eyes pinching shut as Izuku rushes forward. He intercepts the hand that reaches out toward Aizawa with the intent to kill. His staff slams into Overhaul’s wrist with a sharp crack that has the villain pulling back, cradling it to his chest with a hiss of pain. He heals it in the few moments Aizawa’s eyes are still off him, but Izuku doesn’t slow his assault. His staff spins dangerously between his hands, movements well practiced, easy,

mindless. He takes a wide swing for Overhaul's head, the villain dropping low, hands slamming into the ground, but Aizawa's eyes are back on him, hair rising back around his shoulders.

"Chrono!" Overhaul barks desperately, backed against invisible ropes. Chronos does not rise. "Eri!" he snaps, a final wretched attempt at control. The name is like a command, his voice dark, *murderous.* "Don't you remember what I told you about the last person that tried to *'save'* you?! You'll only kill them if you try to stay!"

Fury slams through Izuku, a silent snarl on his lips when there's a shout from Naomasa. He risks a single glance back, barely catching sight of the detective stopping Eri with a firm hand around her arm. She strains against the hold, but eventually gives in with a frustrated sob, falling back into his chest.

Izuku swings a vicious kick towards Overhaul climbing spikes digging into the villain's palm where he raises his hand to block the attack. Blood patters against the ground, soaking greedily into the dry earth. Overhaul curses, pulling back when Izuku raises his boot again, slamming it down to just catch the edge of the villain's coat as he throws himself back. Aizawa's capture weapon whips out to wrap around the villain, pinning one arm to his side.

The other one reaches for Izuku.

Overhaul's hand wraps tightly around his ankle, yanking hard to unbalance Izuku and for a moment the boy thinks he's dying again. There's no spark of a quirk beneath his palm but for a moment it feels as if the hand around his ankle burns furiously, as hot as the hands of the first criminal he'd ever stopped. For a moment he's suffocating beneath the blazing heat of the USJ; for a moment he's faced with the fist of a monster; for a moment he's stood on a dark street as Overhaul's hand brushes against his. His chest rises with a choked breath, memories flickering as he throws himself away from the villain, all but crawling— desperate for distance.

He falls back, keeping low to the ground. His ponytail falls out, hair fanning around his shoulders and slipping into his face. It clings to his forehead where sweat has formed, brushing against his lashes. His eyes are fully dilated, blown wide with an overwhelming fear as Aizawa reaches to steady him.

And there must be something in that moment that Overhaul hangs onto: a memory, or a feeling of some kind. A gentle furrow of his

brow, a slight narrowing of his eyes as if he's studying something particularly annoying.

Izuku takes another shuddering breath, letting Aizawa's touch ground him as he's pulled back to his feet.

There's a spark of recognition in Overhaul's eyes. "I know you," he growls, slowly pushing himself up from the ground, still half-bound.

Izuku stills in shock, resting some of his weight against the hero holding him up. His emotions flare wildly, uncontrollable and all-consuming— fear, terror, *dread.*

"Surprise," Izuku croaks, panic threatening to choke him.

Chisaki Kai, alias *Overhaul.* He doesn't know how the villain keeps recognizing him.

Maybe it's because Izuku's the only one crazy enough to keep coming back.

Overhaul's scowl deepens. "I warned you what would happen the next time you got in my way."

Beside him, Aizawa tenses but does not look away as Izuku pulls away, steadying himself. He falls into a defensive stance, body following familiar moves even when his mind stalls. His mouth proceeds without him: "Seems I'm not very good at listening."

Aizawa's hand falls away from Izuku as he takes a similar stance next to him.

"A fatal flaw of yours," Overhaul sneers.

"Fatal?" Izuku laughs nervously, grip tightening around his staff. "I don't know about that. I have no plans on dying today."

"Few people ever do," the man responds coldly. "You certainly didn't the last time we met, now did you?"

Izuku swallows, eyes flickering to Aizawa. "Can't say that I did."

"Red—" Aizawa rumbles, a warning, a question.

Overhaul's lip pulls up in disgust, ignoring the hero. "Despite your notorious title of vigilante, it seems that you are, in the end, nothing but a child, *Piper."*

He spits the name like a curse as Izuku freezes, heart plunging low. A black hole yawns open, dragging him with it. Despite Aizawa's steady glare, Izuku feels as if the ground is crumbling beneath him. It takes far less than a touch to undo him, a simple word—a single name.

Piper.

It takes everything he has in him not to glance at Aizawa, at Naomasa who has undoubtedly heard as well. Maybe they won't understand the jab. Maybe they'll understand it all too well. Maybe this is how he's found out as the final puzzle piece clatters before them, glaringly obvious.

Izuku's body jerks into motion, staff crackling with electricity. There's an indescribable mix of emotions swelling within him, rising like the sun over the sea. A boiling lake of fury and terror and righteous judgment cast out in the blow that breezes across Overhaul's chest. Anger and fear, he finds, aren't so far separated. Electricity dances along the villain's skin, biting as he stumbles back with a snarl. "You're sick, did you know?" Overhaul spits, "You've got a *disease*. But you're the anomaly! You wanted to be a hero, Piper?! Despite being powerless—despite having no quirk! *You keep coming back!"* Overhaul yells, belligerent, "A normal person wouldn't be so *stupid!* People will give up once their quirks are gone! They won't be so brave–so *foolish!"* he shouts, face twisted with a rage beyond reason, "They wouldn't dare to mess with us then; I'll revive the Hassaikai. *That's* what I set out to do. You're all infected…with that modern idea, but… with Eri's power—" he pants, struggling against his restraints, "I'll cure you heroes!"

He gets his free hand around Aizawa's capture weapon before throwing himself behind the nearest pillar, dragging himself out of the hero's eyeline. It takes only a moment for the world to explode around them. Izuku raises an arm to shield his face, Aizawa's capture weapon ripping away from Overhaul to snag Izuku by his torso, yanking him out of the way. The hero catches him, righting him back on his feet. "Careful," Aizawa states, something soft in his voice that neither have time to unpack, "Don't go dying on me, kid."

Izuku nods and they break apart, flanking the villain on either side as Aizawa's quirk reactivates. Izuku sweeps their surroundings with a careful eye, finding Naomasa and Eri tucked behind one of the newly formed spikes. There's a gash on Naomasa's arm, bleeding sluggishly, but he holds Eri tightly to him regardless. The detective's eyes are wide, flickering with some unanswered something as he tracks Izuku

across the battlefield.

The fight is a ruthless one, even with Aizawa's quirk all it takes is a single blink, a single moment of broken eye contact to put their lives back on the line. It's a dance, a back and forth, a push and pull. Izuku lands a harsh blow to Overhaul's ribs and receives a vicious kick in retaliation. Aizawa's leg is bleeding from some stray attack and Izuku's definitely sporting what feels like a sprained ankle, but neither of them can afford to stop, to stall, to hesitate for even a moment. And all Naomasa can do is watch as it plays out.

Because Piper is *alive;* because Piper is *Midoriya—Reo's best friend. The kid that'd been hiding under his nose all this time.* All those months ago when he'd interviewed the boy his statement: *'I'm not a vigilante'* had come back as a *lie.* But Midoriya had explained the phenomenon away and Naomasa hadn't even *thought* to push any deeper. He'd spent months chasing Piper's shadow, desperate to *help.*

And then Piper died. Or, at least, that's what everyone was made to believe. But Piper is fighting just ahead of him. He has a new name, a new disguise, but underneath it all the same boy remains.

Midoriya Izuku.

He'd never been able to save Piper. And even now he feels powerless to prevent this fight, to save anyone.

Then his eyes find Chronos' unconscious form, trailing to the discarded gun laying just out of the villain's reach, still loaded with bullets engineered to suppress quirks in a way they'd never seen before.

The detective finds himself standing without realizing, weaving his way toward the weapon; Eri tucked close to his chest. He bends, the gun a familiar weight in his hand. "Eri," he murmurs softly, "I need you to cover your ears." The girl looks up at him with wide eyes and he can understand fully now why Piper had never stopped his pursuit to save her. "You and me, we're gonna keep him from hurting anyone else, yeah?" There's fear in her eyes, bravery in her actions as she presses her hands up to her ears, giving him a firm nod, signaling that she's ready.

Naomasa's aim is as steady as it's always been. He waits calmly for his opening, the whirlwind of discoveries safely stowed in his chest for the moment. He needs a clear mind, a firm demeanor, as he tracks Overhaul's movements, seizing the first opportunity he receives. Even

with an unfamiliar gun in his hand, he doesn't miss. The dart takes an unsuspecting Overhaul in the back, sending him jerking forward with a surprised grunt. Izuku's staff catches him in the temple seconds after, snapping his head to the side. The villain stumbles a step, blinking sluggishly.

"I should've… kept you dead that day—" Overhaul struggles to right himself. He shakes his head, expression wrought with fury. "Maybe then—maybe this…" He struggles to find the words.

"Maybe," Izuku offers softly, something almost like weary agreement in his voice as Aizawa slams a final fist into the villain's face with a sharp *crack* that has Overhaul's eyes rolling back in his head. Izuku watches him fall almost numbly. "Guess we'll never know, will we?"

Izuku turns away as Aizawa moves to cuff the villain. Naomasa and Eri stand farther off, waiting. He walks slowly towards them, exhaustion written in every line of his body.

"Eri," Izuku hates how his voice cracks.

Naomasa gently sets the girl back on her feet, a light hand on her back pushing her in his direction.

Izuku carefully pulls the mask from his face, letting it hang limply in his grasp as he kneels. His hand is outstretched softly towards her, an invitation, an apology, a promise. "I'm sorry it took so long to find you again."

He watches her eyes, filled first with confusion, then with surprise, hope, desperation. "You're—" Her next words die in her throat. She takes an unsteady step towards him; a single, small hand reaches out to meet his.

That's all he needs.

Izuku bites back his tears, taking her hand and pulling her in close, he smiles into her hair, eyes crinkling shut. "That must've been scary, right?" She pulls away from the hug, looking up at him with wide eyes, studying his face. "Hello again," he smiles. There's a relieved softness that paints his face, a lingering flicker of guilt—grief—dancing in his eyes. "It's been a while since we've seen each other, huh?" he croaks. He watches as those brilliant, scarlet eyes fill with tears before she throws her arms back around his neck; tiny hands pressing against the burn scar on his nape. "Sorry if I scared you back then," Izuku whispers, "I'm alright." She cries silently into him and he

can feel his chest shutter with an indescribable grief as his adrenaline fades.

Naomasa approaches from the side looking him over as if to memorize his face or check him for wounds. “You’re him.” It’s not a question. His voice is soft, reverent, his face twisted in a mask that’s four parts disbelieve and six parts awe.

Izuku glances up at the man, fear returning like Mercury in retrograde. He looks between the detective and Aizawa. “No one can know,” Izuku whispers hoarsely, a desperate plea, a prayer he doesn’t expect to be answered.

But Naomasa crouches next to them, quiet, studying him before slowly, surely, pulling the both of them into a tight hug. “You’re alive,” he murmurs. Izuku relaxes minutely into his hold as the detective’s breath shudders in his chest. “...Did Reo ever—”

But, Izuku knows what he’s going to ask. “No.”

Even without the use of a quirk, it’s obvious that it’s a *lie.* But Naomasa holds his tongue, pushing no farther, squeezing him tighter—a reminder that it’s real.

Izuku locks eyes with Aizawa over the man’s shoulder. He pulls gently away from Naomasa, the hero’s presence like a stone skipping across water, rippling waves of anxiety rolling through him. “Eraser…”

Aizawa sighs, crouching in front of the boy. His hand rises, ruffling softly through Izuku’s sweaty hair. “The day’s not over, problem child,” and though Izuku can’t read the man’s expression, he can hear the fond relief in his voice. “Let’s get out of here first.”

Izuku can only nod.

Chapter End Notes

> This chapter truly has been a long time coming, all the cards are finally on the table.
>
> With only two chapters left we've reached this story's long-awaited climax, all that remains is the end.
>
> Until next time

Earthshine

Chapter Summary

> Overhaul has been defeated, Eri saved, and Piper's identity revealed to the two people closest to his case.
>
> The final chapter begins.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fanart :)

yabee-tea x x (done in the three minutes before i posted this because they HATE ME)

konquestionmysanity

Luka

Bas0ska

fretful-ferret x x

batfox x x x

sorrel x x x x x

skeleton-forest

dippy_ x

gartic phone piper memes!! x x x x x x x

The other heroes find them eventually, Snipe blasting another hole through the wall just in time for the last of the drug in Lemillion's system to fade. He phases back into the main room— a panicked look on his face that melts into relief as the room floods with heroes and the teen directs some to where Nighteye's still trapped.

No one mentions Piper.

The anxiety pulses like a molten core of lead in his chest, heavy, near

suffocating. But it allows him to keep Eri in his arms for longer, only passing her off to the waiting paramedics once they've made their way outside. He can tell Aizawa and Naomasa have questions, can see it in their furtive gazes, quick, fleeting.

Aizawa sticks close to Eri's side as Izuku's swept away by another medic, injuries bandaged and checked over, a warning to keep weight off his ankle till he gets it looked at properly.

And still, there is no word of Piper.

He can see Nighteye and Lemillion being fussed over in the back of their own ambulances, Centipeder watching over them with a nervous clicking of mandibles. Naomasa wanders the crowd, barking orders left and right as what remains of the Shie Hassaikai are being piled into armored vehicles. Overhaul is among them, hands bound within bulky quirk suppressant cuffs, unconscious where he dangles unceremoniously over Snipe's shoulder before he's dumped in the back of a van and further restrained.

This is the last he sees of the villain as the door slams shut behind him.

There's surprisingly little relief in the sight. Even with Eri safe, even with everyone alive and Overhaul captured, there's still an awful gnawing in his gut. Because Naomasa knows, and so does Aizawa.

Aizawa doesn't know what to think of the boy in the ambulance across from him. Everything feels stilted and off-balance because this is *Piper*. The kid he'd fought alongside at the USJ, the *kid* he'd trusted to protect his students, the *kid* he'd thought *died* trying to protect him. Who had carried him up those hundred steps, even in his injured state.

Midoriya Izuku.

Pied Piper.

He'd been drawing comparisons between the two since the sports festival, and maybe, if Piper's death hadn't been announced, he would've realized. The kid's fighting style, his use of a staff, the scars, the instincts. But hindsight is always 20/20.

Back in that alley with Stain, Piper was who he'd seen in that dark

silhouette, the glint of a metal staff, the hunched rage and determination of a child too young. Then he'd started training Midoriya, and the lines between the two had further blurred unwillingly. Subconsciously he'd known, consciously he berated himself for the constant comparisons— for the hope. Because Piper was gone; because Midoriya deserved to be seen as more than the shadow of a dead vigilante.

Piper is quirkless. Piper is alive. Piper is Midoriya Izuku.

The revelation keeps catching him off guard.

He holds Eri's hand in his as the EMTs look them over, a reassuring presence at her side— though officially there to keep any involuntary quirk usage at bay. It's a good excuse to keep her close if nothing else.

She's a distraction from Midoriya and a reminder of everything Piper had done to get her back.

Naomasa keeps himself busy in the aftermath, directing officers and heroes and trying not to find Midoriya within the crowd. Because there'd been a body—laid across the sands of Dagobah. Naomasa had seen worse in his time as a detective, but none had impacted him quite like the state Piper's had been in. The sight—the *smell.* Because that'd been a kid, *his kid.* One that'd left him food as an apology, one that'd entrusted him with Overhaul's case, one whose biggest regret was not saving the girl they'd just carried out in their arms.

But Pied Piper was not dead.

And Midoriya Izuku was living proof of it.

'No one can know,' he'd pleaded. His eyes wide with a desperate fear. He hadn't even tried to hide it, hadn't tried to lie even though Nao was likely to have let him.

Naomasa keeps himself busy, because if he doesn't he feels like he'll burn up. The itch under his skin is overwhelming, but he can't let it be.

He shoos reporters off, orders a wider perimeter to be set, snaps at an agent from the hero commission, all to delay the inevitable. He holds his shoulders back, his spine straight— a calm exterior to shield the turbulent sea beneath. Aizawa accompanies Eri to the hospital and

Naomasa can't delay following them for long, even while he can feel Midoriya's gaze burn into his back.

He braces himself with a breath, turning to where the boy lingers on the sidelines, favoring one leg, waiting for orders—waiting for an arrest.

Midoriya flinches when he spots the detective's approach, but he holds himself well, falling back onto something distinctly Piper-like to keep him steady. Naomasa can see the shift in demeanor, can *recognize it* now that he knows. The green of his eyes, the red of the hinomaru on his chest. He wonders why he hadn't seen it before; he thinks maybe he had and just hadn't believed it.

"Eraser and Eri are headed to the hospital," Naomasa starts, voice rougher than he anticipates, thick with emotion. He clears his throat, hoping to dispell it. It doesn't. "I'll be following them in a moment. Nighteye offered to take you back with Lemillion."

Naomasa can see the confusion scrawled across Midoriya's face. Something like grief flickers to life in the detective's chest— heavy and oppressive and everything he's been trying to bury since they'd crawled their way back to the surface.

"Go home," Nao murmurs, tone slipping into something softer, though still heavy with emotion, "Get some rest," they're not the reassurances he wants to offer Midoriya. It isn't the promise that he'll be safe and that everything will be okay because he doesn't want to lie to the boy. He holds his tongue, saves his reassurances for once he's certain— once he's *sure.*

Midoriya's mouth parts with unspoken words before closing again. There's something scared in his eyes, something hurt. He tries again. "I'm sorry," his voice comes out half-strangled before he clears his throat, starting again. "You were the last person I wanted to hurt like that."

There's no plee in the words, Naomasa gets no sense that this is some final, desperate attempt to get him to keep Piper's secret.

This is merely a confession.

"There were other things I could've done—" Midoriya swallows harshly, "but nothing else… it was…" The boy can't find the words for it, but Naomasa knows. *Because there's no reason to look for someone you've already buried.*

A weak smile pushes at Naomasa's lips. "I'm just glad you're safe." And if that isn't the understatement of a lifetime. He keeps his hands to himself, even as he feels the urge to bring the boy into another hug when he watches his expression break. Something deeper than sadness flickering in his face.

"If anyone was going to find out," Midoriya whispers, "I'm glad it was you."

Izuku doesn't quite know what to do with himself. They return to UA to shower and change, Recovery Girl healing all the injuries they had accrued in the fight with a soft-hearted sort of scowl on her face. And then he's simply… sent home with little fanfare.

His mother makes dinner and puts on a movie while they eat and it'd be peaceful if he wasn't *waiting for something to happen*— for the other shoe to drop.

It never does.

In the morning, he gets ready for school. Slipping out long before Inko was set to wake, hours before he's set to meet Reo at the train station for school. Not even the sun is up yet to greet his arrival. He hasn't been to Dagobah since the last time he visited.

The original memorial for Piper had broken down over time, food offerings taken by wildlife, sidewalks cleared of any remaining trash, there'd been only a handful of ribbons the last time he'd come. But there's more now, *dozens* , all stubbornly tied to the fence, fluttering gently alongside the old.

Just beyond the sidewalk is the beach below, the *actual* beach now. The dumping grounds he'd once walked between have been cleared and he can see unhindered where the sand meets the sea. There's a few larger objects further down the beach and he can see a small group of people struggling to haul them off from where he stands as the sun just begins to rise. Hints of the coming dawn lighting up the horizon. There's a couple on the boardwalk, watching the waves, chattering idly, bits of laughter catching on the breeze.

Shinsou had told him there'd been some sort of cleanup project started up in honor of Piper. But Izuku hadn't been sure how long it would last given the insurmountable amount of trash he remembers had been here.

He makes his way down to the sand, staring out over the open ocean. Listening to the gentle lapping of waves, the drifting murmur of conversations.

The sand beneath his shoes feels comforting in a way, like a homecoming in the oddest sense of the word. He'd trained here once, fighting invisible enemies in the dying light of day, a discarded pipe as his weapon. He'd stood here once, reading over tear-stained paper beneath the orange glow of street lamps. It feels fitting that he finds himself here, perhaps for the last time given the circumstances.

He hadn't heard anything since he'd parted ways with Aizawa and Naomasa the day before. No task forces had been sent to raid their apartment overnight, no officers had arrived to take him into custody. He wasn't sure what was happening; he wasn't sure why *nothing* was happening. They knew now—who he was, what he'd done. Why let him leave at all yesterday?

It'd be easy to compare his DNA to the body he'd left behind. So what were they waiting for? Did they want a public arrest? Did they want to send some sort of message that even death would not prevent justice?

There's a cheer from the group to his right as they successfully load an old fridge into the back of a truck. And despite the anxiety threatening to overtake him, Izuku feels a smile twitching at his lips. Hirano is apparently among the gathered group, he recognizes her voice even from this distance. The girl gives the group a playful flex, showing off with a laugh. It's not long before their eyes fall on his approaching form and Hirano's smile turns into something blinding. *"Midoriya!"* She waves excitedly, a hop in her step as she bounds over, dragging him into a hug.

He can't help the laugh that escapes him. Because even though his secret's out, Eri is safe. And there's some relief in that idea, that no matter how the rest of the day plays out, she'll be taken care of. He pulls back from the hug with a small smile, looking over the group of mostly strangers. "Mind if I help?"

"Where's Eri?" Oboro asks with a yawn, already dressed for work. He slumps into the seat next to Aizawa, leaning his head against the other's shoulder.

Aizawa takes another sip of coffee. "Zashi took her to school early to see Recovery Girl. Said he wanted to show her around a bit before the

kids get there."

"And she's okay?"

Aizawa nods. "Had to calm her down from a nightmare last night, but she's done well aside from that." The corner of his lips twitch upward. "The hero association wanted to bring her in for quirk testing right after the raid but Tsukauchi fought them off," he sighs, "Demanded that they let her settle in after everything she's been through."

Oboro laughs, soft and sleepy. "Can't say I expected you to show up with a sleeping kid in your arms, but I'm certainly not opposed."

"Mic's already attached," Aizawa hums, "Says she has your hair."

Oboro smiles. "I feel like the detective won't be the only one fighting off the hero association for her."

There's a lull, a peaceful quiet, one that can't stay.

"…Piper's alive," Aizawa murmurs, breaking the silence.

Oboro stills beside him, raising his head from his shoulder. "You're certain?"

"I saw him. He's one of Mic's kids."

"...You know who he is?"

Aizawa nods.

Oboro is quiet for a long moment. "You haven't told anyone?"

The hero hums. "Just you. Detective Tsukachi found out the same time I did."

Oboro relaxes, pushing himself up. "He's a good kid," he says it like an agreement, like Aizawa had been the one to say it first.

Aizawa raises a brow at him. "You say that like you met Piper."

Oboro smiles, soft and radiant. "Not Piper."

But there's room at the end of that sentence that tells Aizawa everything he needs to know, that somehow, someway Oboro had already *known.* That Piper was alive, that he'd been right under their noses this whole time. How, *why.* He presses a kiss to the side of

Aizawa's head.

"I'm off to work," the man reminds him, picking up his bag from the counter.

Aizawa rises with him. "But how—"

Oboro's eyes crinkle at the corners, the sunlight from the window illuminating the steely blue of his iris. "I've got appointments to keep, new client and all," he laughs, it's a relieved sort of sound. And suddenly the pieces fall into place.

A gentle huff escapes him, understanding, soft. "Doctor-patient confidentiality, I assume?" Aizawa asks.

Oboro only hums a noncommittal note, fighting off a smile that old scars cannot dim.

Izuku's shoes are full of sand, and his shirt clings uncomfortably to his back where sweat has gathered. But Reo still pulls him into a hug as soon as he arrives at their usual train stop, holding him tight like he's afraid Izuku will disappear. Izuku holds him back just as tight, burying his face into the boy's shoulder.

He hadn't said much to Reo the night before. They'd called of course, and Izuku had reassured him that everyone was safe and taken care of and that they'd rescued Eri. And he'd drifted to sleep listening to Reo ramble about his latest project to keep their minds occupied and off the fact that there was clearly something Izuku wasn't telling him. And he'd, *admittedly,* left out some of the more important details of the raid—like being outed as a supposedly dead vigilante to the two people who'd fought the hardest to catch him.

They're in a quiet corner of the station and for a moment Izuku lets them stay in that cushioned place between reality and hope, just a short moment before he explains what he'd been keeping from Reo since he'd returned home. Eventually, he forces out a soft: "Your uncle knows."

He can feel the way Reo's breath catches. "Knows what?" he asks, too quiet for how loud his friend could get. But Reo already knows the answer.

His fingers dig into the back of Reo's uniform, wishing the world would just swallow them whole. "About Piper…" he replies, just as

soft, “Aizawa knows too. Ov—one of the villains recognized him, addressed him by name.”

Reo’s hold around him tightens. “But you’re here?” It’s a question, desperate, confused.

Izuku shakes his head. “I don’t know.” He pulls back. “They didn’t seem *mad,* but— I don’t *know.* I *really* don’t know.”

“I-I’ll talk to my uncle,” Reo tries, “Maybe if I help explain it he’ll—”

But Izuku cuts him off, “It won’t matter if Aizawa doesn’t agree to it as well.”

Reo curses, turning to pace. A few passersby cast flickering glances at them before moving away.

“He’ll probably want to talk with me today,” Izuku states, tracking Reo with his eyes, “I couldn’t bring myself to tell you last night but… I wanted you to know, just in case.”

The boy whips back towards him. “You can’t just—!” Reo’s voice drops, anger dissipating just as quickly as it’d come, “Don’t say it like that…” he finished weakly. “We’ll—You saved his life… surely he won’t…”

Izuku manages a weak smile. Emerald and amber fall into orbit with one another, like binary stars, like the universe in motion. Izuku offers the boy his hand. “Thank you for always being here.”

Reo deflates with something sadly soft in his eyes as he takes Izuku’s hand in his own. “I don’t know who I’d be if I’d never met you, and I don’t ever want to find out.” He gives a gentle squeeze of their hands as their train pulls to a stop behind them. “I’ve thought a lot about how easy it could’ve been to never meet, how *easy* you could’ve just never come back,” he whispers, “But you stayed. And I am *never* letting you go, Midoriya Izuku.”

“Is that a promise?” Izuku asks softly, something to match the look on Reo’s face.

“No,” he huffs, the barest hints of a smile twitching at his lips, “it’s a *threat.* And if they try anything to take you from me I’ll reign hell on Earth to get you back. *That* is a promise. I know you don’t always believe it, but the people of Musutafu—the people you’ve *saved*— they won’t let you go without a fight either.”

It's overcast when they arrive at UA, though the weatherman had assured it wouldn't stay that way for long. The windows reflect an endless sea of clouds in the meantime and at the very least it's a welcome break from the heat. Shinsou meets them at the gate with a yawn, bumping shoulders with Izuku as he falls into line beside them.

"Saw Aizawa on the way in today," Shinsou states boredly, "warned me we won't be training today."

Izuku lets out a noncommittal hum as Reo bumps their own shoulders, a reassuring presence at his side— a silent reminder of his promise.

The day is a surprisingly normal one. Literature with Cementos, and History with Snipe, P.E. with Vlad King. Reo stumbles over himself at lunch, just as surprised to see him there as Izuku was to be there. He's not sure what's going on or how many people could know his secret by now.

He can see the unasked question in Reo's eyes, but Izuku has no answer for him. Unsurprisingly, Reo and Shinsou are the ones to keep the conversation flowing, idle, light-hearted chatter because even Shinsou can see something's happened. And, just like on the beach, he can see a smile pulling at his lips again.

"I think you should tell Izuku about your niche internet fame," Reo grins, a mischievous look on his face when he catches Shinsou's eye.

The teen shovels another bite of food into his mouth, speaking around it. "No I don't think I should actually."

"I think you should," Izuku pipes in, looking between them excitedly.

After a short staring match, Shinsou eventually sighs, dropping his utensils. He swallows, leaning back in his seat, arms folding over his chest. "I'm not gonna be the one to say it."

Reo turns to Izuku excitedly. "He runs a Piper stan account."

"I do *not,"* Shinsou denies, lurching forward. "I run a *mildly successful* youtube channel that *discusses* Piper. There is a *difference."*

Izuku's eyes widen in shock, looking between the two.

Reo's grin only grows. "He made a three-part series about how he

thought Piper's death was some sort of coverup."

At that Izuku snorts, trying to hold his amusement in for Shinsou's sake before ultimately failing. He's quick to fall into bright peels of laughter.

It's enough to dissolve all of the current anxieties he's been storing. Because Eri is safe; because Reo swore to protect him; because he has people that would do anything to see him through the end of this.

Lunch ends and there's still no word from Aizawa. Not in art history or math, not even English, at least, not until the final bell rings and Yamada stops him on the way out.

Like a wire pulled too tight, Izuku can feel his anxiety return with a painful sort of *snap*. Shinsou spares him a glance, brow raised in question, a silent: *'everything okay?'* He hasn't seen behind the curtain, doesn't know what's happening. But Shinsou has to be *aware* that he's missing something important.

For Izuku the sight alone is reassuring; it reminds him of Reo's promise from before.

Izuku smiles, mouthing a quiet: *'yeah'*. And he doesn't know if it's a lie or not. But he knows Reo will make sure it won't stay that way for long.

Izuku follows Yamada without complaint. The hero chatters idly as they walk the halls and it's clear by that alone that he doesn't seem privy to Izuku's best kept secret. Yamada grins at Izuku over his shoulder. "Eri's been asking about you."

Izuku feels something in his chest loosen. A smile blooms to life on his lips, soft as the sunrise. "How is she?"

Yamada is momentarily caught off guard by the look on his face, by the gentleness of his tone. His stride stutters for all of half a second before he forces himself onward. Some four months ago he'd gotten a call from a hysteric mother about the boy trailing just behind him. He's changed in the time since.

Yamada smiles back as they slow to a stop outside the teachers' lounge. "You can ask her yourself." He pushes the door open quietly, revealing those inside.

Any further anxiety Izuku had been hanging onto dissipates at the

sight of Aizawa holding Eri in his lap. The hero works at grading essays while she scribbles in a notebook with crayons they'd scrounged up for her. She's wearing a new dress, bandages discarded, hair freshly washed; Izuku can't stop the tears that well up in his eyes. He wipes at them furiously, trying not to draw attention from the two just yet as Yamada rests a comforting hand on his back.

"She's staying with us at the moment," the hero tells him, quiet enough that the others can't hear. He can tell Aizawa's clocks their presence however, even if he pretends to ignore them.

"Us?" The words come out a bit strained, too full of emotion.

Yamada just wiggles his fingers out in front of him, two identical rings catching the light. He'd seen the same ones around Aizawa's neck just before the raid, he realizes. "We're married, you know?" the hero tells him with a bright grin. "Our third is a pediatric therapist, so rest assured she's being taken care of." His grin dims a little, turning to something soft. "We're already attached, I think."

Izuku sniffles, blinking away any lingering tears. "Eri deserves something good."

"She does," then, with another grin, Yamada calls to the two with a sing-song voice, *"Oh Eriii~* I brought someone to see you~"

The other two finally look over at their arrival as Eri's eyes go wide and she wriggles out of Aizawa's lap to rush towards him. He crouches, throwing his arms around her as she barrels into his chest. He laughs, nearly falling back with the impact. "Red!"

Izuku holds her tight. "You know, Izuku is what my friends call me," he explains with a smile.

She pulls away a little to study his face. "Izuku?" Eri asks, testing the name out.

The boy nods, expression soft.

She presses her hands to his cheeks. "Thank you, Izuku," she whispers the words, a determined sort of look crossing her face, like this is a secret just for the two of them. And maybe it had been at one point.

Eri throws herself back into the hug and Izuku's eyes flicker to Aizawa as he pulls her close.

Eri eventually lets go, dragging him to look at all the drawings she's done today. At the end, she shyly hands Izuku one of them. Crayon scribbled against the paper with care, in it Aizawa and Izuku are donned in their hero gear, standing on either side of Eri who has her arms raised to hold their hands.

Izuku beams at her, praising her skills alongside Yamada who looks through the art with them.

Aizawa lets them have their time, but the moment can't last forever. He doesn't know how much time passes before Aizawa stands. "Midoriya."

It's a summons if Izuku's ever heard one. He looks up to catch sight of the soft tilt of the hero's head towards the door. The boy feels himself stiffen but pushes through the spike of fear. He stands, sliding Eri's drawing off the desk to carefully tuck it into his bag.

Eri and Yamada are absorbed in the little drawing competition they'd started up, her tongue poked out in heavy concentration. It's a good time to slip out unnoticed.

Izuku follows Aizawa quietly out the door. He thinks he'll be brought to another room like before for, at the very least, some sort of an interrogation. Instead, he leads Izuku to a stairwell, winding their way up the steps until the hero pushes out onto the rooftop.

Izuku has had nightmares about this place, but seeing it in person makes it feel so ordinary—so plain. Gravel crunches under their shoes as they move closer to the edge of the roof, it's the perfect height to lean against, though neither of them do. They stop just before it, Aizawa's hands stuffed in his pockets, looking out over the city.

The sky has cleared, just like the weatherman had said, though a few clouds still linger above.

The days were getting shorter again, soon enough fall will be upon them, then winter, then spring and summer again.

They're both quiet for a long time, neither one saying a word. They watch the clouds drift overhead, listening to the city breathe below them—a city they had both fought to protect in their own ways.

"Detective Tsukauchi and I talked," Aizawa starts suddenly, looking out over the horizon, "After the raid. We'd both come to the same conclusion."

Izuku's anxiety rises and falls like the steady lapping of the tide. He holds onto Reo's promise like a moon in orbit, a silent mantra of: *'they won't let you go without a fight'*.

But there's an amused exhale from the hero, "I think he figured he was going to have to fight to get me to agree with him. But really there wasn't anything to disagree on." He looks down at Izuku. The last time they'd met before Piper's death, they'd both been bloody and broken. Izuku can see the scar it'd left the hero with, carved beneath his eye. It shares a similar curve to the ones on his ribs.

"The world thinks Piper is dead," Aizawa states simply. There's nothing hidden in the words, no anger, no contempt. He searches for something in Izuku's eyes. Whatever it is he's looking for, he must find. "And really," Aizawa rumbles, "there's no reason for us to tell them otherwise. Any possible punishments for his crimes died with him." He finds a hint of a smile on the hero's lips. The answer comes from his mouth like it's a simple fact rather than the decision Izuku had been most afraid to hear since he'd donned the mantle that was Pied Piper. He makes it seem like an easy decision.

And… maybe it *is*.

Izuku looks at Aizawa, eyes wide, unbelieving. "You're not telling anyone?"

There's a breath of laughter from the hero. "I'll probably tell Mic, despite how he seems he's rather good at keeping secrets… He was worried about you too."

"And… you said the detective agreed to it?" Izuku asks hoarsely.

Aizawa sighs. "He was the one who asked that I keep it quiet. I doubt he'll ever tell you, but I think there was a point while he was working your case that he stopped *wanting* to catch you. But he wanted you safe and catching you seemed like the best option back then."

Izuku falls silent at that, turning back to study the skyline, letting Aizawa's words settle under his skin, comforting his frayed nerves. He fights off the tears he can feel building in his eyes.

Above them, the sun emerges from behind a cloud, warming their backs and illuminating the finish line just steps ahead of him.

In another universe, there is a boy with green hair and viridescent eyes just like Izuku that is on his way to becoming Japan's number

one hero, whose idol has become his father, whose bully has become his friend. But in *this universe* , Midoriya Izuku, the boy with a stippling of stars across his cheeks and a roaring sun for a heart, decides that he has it better. He has scars carved into his body like constellations that may try to prove otherwise, but in this universe Izuku is *happy* .

He is on his own path to heroism. It is far from glorious, but it's enough for the boy with friends turned soulmates, and circumstantial adversaries turned father figures. It is enough for he who has experienced death. It is enough. *He is enough.*

He looks back to Aizawa, an emerald hope burning bright as the sun in his eyes. Aizawa extends a hand out toward the boy. "You taught yourself how to be a vigilante. Now…" he says with a softness Izuku doesn't expect, "let me teach you how to be a hero."

Chapter End Notes

> All that remains now is our epilogue, a final note on the story that was Pied Piper.
> His story has been a long four years in the making and now it finally draws to a close. This end has long since been written and now that it's finally out it feels like this story couldn't have ended any other way. At the start of this all I set out to write a quirkless vigilante fic that felt realistic where Izuku struggled and lost and hurt just as much as he won. A lot has changed from the start, both for Piper and myself, some of it good change, some of it bad. I felt nothing but unbridled excitement while waiting to post this chapter, but now that I'm here, writing this end note, there's a bittersweetness to it all. It's the end of a chapter for not only Piper, but for me as well.
> But there's still more to this story, one last goodbye to our cast and a final thank you note from me.
>
> I'll be posting chapter 69 on May 14th so I hope everyone is looking forward to the end! Until next time!

The Milky Way

Chapter Notes

The Butterfly Effect.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The final batch of fanart :)

Sorrel x x x

fretful-ferret

Egbert

echonova x x x x

skeleton-forest x

yabee-tea x x x

Alvaro_WillowTree

#1 on Trending

Celebrating the Hero: Pied Piper

[Video transcript: “Pied Piper was not a hero in the way that many people know the word. Piper was just your average young adult doing what he could to make the world a better place, a *safer* place,” the narrator stresses, “for people like you and me. Personally, I never got the chance to meet Piper, but you didn’t have to meet him to see how much good he was doing for people. We may never know his name or his background, but we know what he stood for, and the community that he cherished. We know of his determination, and his resolve, and his strength even in the face of adversity. Piper was no All Might or Endeavor. He had no license. But he didn’t need one to protect the people of Musutafu. When the news first broke, so did a community’s heart. But it’s important in our mourning to celebrate Piper’s life and his impact on the community at large—]

#piedpiper #vigilante #news

6.7M views · 3 days ago

LilacMinds

651K subscribers

In memoriam of the vigilante Pied Piper, a villain in the eyes of the law, but a hero to the people. This video is in continuing partnership with The Peoples' Hero Foundation, a non-profit organization that aims to support families and individuals struggling through hard times. To donate, click on the link below…

SHOW MORE

Comments 25,867

📌 Pinned by LilacMinds

LilacMinds 3 days ago

This will be my last Piper video for awhile. He's someone who has inspired me a lot since he first started appearing on the internet, with no desire for fame or money, saving people just because he was able to. I know that for many of you, he's the only reason you found my channel. But I'm excited to start working on some more collaborative projects in the future, so I hope everyone is looking forward to it!

blackholeca 3 days ago

thank you for helping tell Piper's story, there's a lot of cruel people on the internet who will say what he did was wrong, but he saved peoples lives. He was a good person who did so many good things and I hope history remembers him for that. I met a lot of my current friends through a discord group for people who supported him, I never met Piper either but even so he's brought so much light into my life, I hope he's at peace wherever he is

morbidlydazed 3 days ago

Piper brought me some of my closest friends. So

he may not be a hero to everyone, but he's a hero

to me.

skeleton-forest 3 days ago

this video fucked me up :(

hiranoAAA 1 day ago

it's been over two months since the news dropped but everyday i still wake up expecting to see news that he somehow got a selfie with Hawks or see a post announcing another successful escape from Death Arms

rip Piper, thank you for changing my life

plutonisms 2 days ago

❤□🩶

Vaughn_Tyler 1 day ago

Rip Piper, you'll live on through the people you saved ❤□

Teafollwer7 3 days ago

ain't no way im crying over a yt video istg

that1bathtubguy 44 min ago

rip a legend, we won't let your legacy go forgotten thank you for all your hard work till now

egg prophet 2 days ago

collaborative projects you say?? 👀👀

vsversus 2 days ago

i'll miss the piper content, but i doubt he'd want us to mourn him for too long he'd probably laugh at us and say 'there's still people to save!' can't wait to see what else you've got in store for us

Urned it 1 day ago

finallyyyyyy i missed your other conspiracy videos they were so funny aksjdhfs

fretful ferret 3 days ago

Thank you Piper

thesleepingmeerkat 3 days ago

thank you Piper

Desert Cryptid 3 days ago

Thank you piper <3

Dippy 2 days ago

thank you piper :(

Moffin :) 2 days ago

thank you piper!!

doodleeee 2 days ago

thanks Piper ❤

Sorrel SK 1 day ago

Thank you Piper

BatFox ;3 1 day ago

THANK YOU PIPER

Load More Comments

hog-population reblogged **projecticeman**

jade-kitsune:

Things that have happened since Piper's death

[Gif 1: *A memorial march of what seems to be hundreds of people crowding the street. Several UA hero students can be seen leading the march. Endeavor's son, Todoroki Shouto, is notably among them.*]

Following the 6 month anniversary of Piper's death, a charity march was hosted in partnership with The Peoples' Hero Foundation, LC Counseling, Musutafu Abound, Put Your Hands Up Radio, and many other organizations!

[Gif 2: *Stream clip of a 500k charity goal being reached on the youtube channel: lilacminds. There are three people in frame, all with masks covering their faces. All three are frozen, staring intently at the screen as the bar for the donation goal fills completely. They jump up wildly, shaking each other in disbelief. The caption reads:* 'We did it! We did it!']

Youtuber Lilacminds hosted a 24 hour live stream charity event in honor of Piper. They hit the first donation goal within the first 12 hours!!

[Gif 3: *A newscast clip from two weeks ago, the news anchor has a grim*

look on her face. In the top left corner is live footage of a large arrest operation taking place. The headline reads: 'League of Villains Arrested Following Secondary Attack on UA'.]

The group responsible for the USJ attack were finally caught!!!! (A lot of people still blame them for Piper's death either way Piper would be glad to see them gone!)

[Gif 4: *Two people dressed in obvious Piper cosplay captured Naruto running down a street past dark. The camera zooms in behind them to an excited dog, also dressed as Piper, racing after the two.*]

Piper Pocalypse: a November event hosted by a fan-lead discord which encouraged people to go out dressed as Piper with the intent to do good deeds for their community. (Police were forced to intervene after nightfall when a large group were found trying to detain a grocery store robber.)

[Gif 5: *Live stream event of the hero billboard charts. Endeavor's face fades from the screen over the stage, replaced by the unannounced first place winner. The announcer extends a dramatic hand towards the screen. The first caption reads:* 'And Japan's number one hero, everyone's favorite—!'. *The next slide fades in, revealing the face of a vigilante. The still image is caught mid-wave, eyes crinkled with a smile, below the image is the name 'Pied Piper'. The second caption reads:* 'Pied Piper? Who-Who is that? What's—'.]

The JP hero billboard chart event was "hacked", a twitter user going by the name: Seven snuck their way backstage to edit the slideshow and put Piper in first place, the organizers didn't realize what had happened until AFTER it was already being broadcast nationwide sgsjsgsnsg

Honorable Mentions:

- Dagobah finally getting cleaned up!!
- Present Mic talking about Piper on his radio show!!!! (this was so sweet)
- Someone stealing death arms credit card information to make a large public donation to the The Peoples' Hero Foundation (one of the organizations most commonly associated with Piper)
- Late October when hundreds of rats were seen swarming old Piper memorials (There's still no solid explanation for this one sgsjhshskd)

- Hawks wearing Piper merch (when I tell you I CRIED)
- The guy that ran on stage during the middle of a big political campaign speech just to shout “Piper for prime minister!” which became a HUGE meme, people even started putting up posters for him shsjsgbsjs
- The government trying to ban carrying *PIPES* after the Piper Pocalypse (did not go well for them ❤)

#my favorite has to be the banning pipes thing #how did they think that was going to work honestly #pied piper #a country is only as strong as its hog population

57,578 notes

˚**Yabeep**˚

@yabeetea

Piper’s death has been hitting me really hard again out of the blue can you guys share your favorite Piper moments :(

2:37 PM · 12/14/32 · Twitter Web App

98 Retweets **368** Likes

˚**Yabeep**˚ @yabeetea · 3m

you guys are too nice thank you so much 😭😭

Ember || @embersofthesunset · 2h

Replying to @**yabeetea**

i can’t find it but there’s a gif that i absolutely

love of Piper just sitting on the edge of the

sidewalk offering a rat one of his fries

ˆ_ˆ @ThermicSine · 2h

Replying to @**yabeetea**

My younger brother just has a really simple quirk that lets his fingers glow but he can't really control it when he gets nervous so he's pretty embarrassed by it but Piper was just absolutely enamored by it and told him how cool it was ˆ_ˆ

> ˚**Yabeep**˚ @yabeetea · 1m
>
> This honestly makes me feels a lot better about my quirk now too □□

Freddy T @whowontbeon · 1h

Replying to @**yabeetea**

technically piper related ig but mines gotta be that time someone censored his iconic "fuck capitalism but also fuck you" line into "capitalism sucks but so do you" i literally lost it dhsjgsjsg started crying from how hard i was laughingdbdg

attention kmart shoppers @salmon_miester · 1h

Replying to @**yabeetea**

Definitely the whole thing he and Endeavor's son had going on (ik there wasn't actually anything

but just watching people freak out about it was funny :) ALSO LIKE??? HIM PUBLICLY DEFENDING PIPER AFTER THE USJ AND SHOWING UP AT THAT MARCH 😭😭😭

Rango @ hero con @rangotango · 2h

Replying to @**yabeetea**

That video of him getting hit by a car and just bouncing back with a thumbs up like it never happened just like 😭👍👍

> ˚**Yabeep**˚ @yabeetea · 14m
>
> KLDFSHKLFJKLSJFLK WHEN WAS THIS????

Goose @goinggoose · 56m

Replying to @**yabeetea**

personally the time he saved me from some idiot mugger lmao

🤯 **Al3x** 🤯 @alexanderplease · 31m

Replying to @**yabeetea**

there's definitely a video somewhere where he hid behind a lamppost to hide from cops 😹😹 its

so stupid cause you can still clearly see him 😹

[Video Description: “Piper didn’t die. There I said it. But really, I’m not the first person who even said it! There are plenty of ways Piper could’ve died, whether through foul play or some other means, but I’m here to talk about the theories on why he could actually be alive. Now we’re gonna go through these pretty fast so hopefully we won’t need a part two. Now, reason number one: his quirk—”.]

theoryn

Part 1 of ? — so much of it fits guys, you can’t even make this up **#piedpiper #vigilante #conspiracy #piperconspiracy**

firma.gaming

Personally I think Piper really is dead even with all the stuff you mentioned, but I agree it definitely reeks of foul play

3d

Liked by creator

view 5 replies ˅

user14386382992

no no listen he’s onto something 🧐🧐🧐

4d Reply

Liked by creator

jeanist in jorts

bro let that dude GO

4d Reply

lilacminds 🤯

WHO LET HIM COOK!?□

1d Reply

the-database-says

HE’S ONTO NOTHING!!□🔥🔥💯💢🔥♨□

1d Reply

smallxmight🤍❤□

GET HIM OUT THE KITCHEN🗣️□🗣️□!□

1d Reply

echonova

REPEAT THAT!?□!?□!?□□□□

1d Reply

straight 4 hawks

come on guys dont be mean 🧔🧔🧔 Piper

wouldnt want this infighting 🧔

1d Reply

blackholetergeist

I cant believe we’re STILL on this □□

2d Reply

Queenie 👑

□□□

3d Reply

yerum more like UR MUM

Never heard anyone say so many wrong things in the span of 60 seconds

1d Reply

Dead.Nebula

Bro really said “my favorite theory is that Piper was actually a government plant from the hero commission” with his whole chest

3d Reply

Cal Takeover

NO FR “when he started gaining too much

popularity they shut down the project and

‘killed’ him” LIKE MY GUY PLEASE

1d Reply

weeapplelover

My personal favorite was “piper faked his own

death”.

1d Reply

It’s a short trip on foot to Misaki’s apartment. There's little comfort to be found in the dark, biting cold of January, but the scarf around his neck keeps him warm. It’s one of Sansa’s he’d stolen from the coat rack on the way out. Naomasa tucks his phone away, burying his hands into his coat pockets with a small smile at the thought of the article he’d just read: *What Piper Left Behind.*

He’d left a lot behind, Naomasa thinks, had cast a shadow far larger than himself that lingered even in his absence.

Naomasa’s breath fogs out in front of him, and through it he sees

movement further down the sidewalk, a slinking shadow that avoids the bleeding glow of the streetlamps. Naomasa's stride stutters, slowing.

It's a figure, nearly unnoticeable in the dark, slipping down the alley between Misaki's apartment block and another and the detective can't help but pull to stop out in front of it. "Midoriya?" he asks quietly, it's only a guess, but when the figure pauses beside the dumpster, turning towards him, that's all the confirmation he needs. Naomasa smiles.

"Hello," Izuku chokes out, shifting anxiously on his feet as he moves back towards the detective. The boy has one of his many brightly colored pieces of hero merch on, though the darkness saps all color from it. The hood too is drawn up over his head, hiding his curls.

He looks more like Piper like this.

Naomasa looks at him fondly. "On your way to see Reo?" he asks with a chuckle.

The nervous tension he'd spotted in the boy's shoulders relaxes all in one go. "How'd you guess?" he jokes, then: "You're coming for dinner right?" Izuku asks a little awkwardly, fidgeting with gloved fingers in a way that helps fight off the cold.

Naomasa smiles, gentle and reassuring before he nods. "I'll be there."

Watching the boy scramble up the fire escape is an oddly comforting sight. It's still difficult sometimes for him to remember that Midoriya and Piper are one and the same. Some days he still wakes from nightmares that whisper to him: *"Piper's dead"*. And in a world that's still mourning the death of the vigilante, there are times he finds himself mourning with them. But Sansa is always there to offer his shoulder on those days, and Midoriya is never too far from Reo's side.

He continues his walk to his sister's apartment, slipping through the lobby and up the elevator unlike his ex-vigilante counterpart. He's greeted at the door by Sansa. There's the smell of curry in the air and clattering from the kitchen and familiar laughter drifting from Reo's room.

"Nao!" Misaki greets with a bright laugh when she spots him, pulling him into a hug, "Sansa was telling me you guys finally got stuff sorted with the moving company."

Naomasa laughs, hugging her back. "Everything'll finally be arriving

tomorrow. I may steal the boys to help unpack."

"Please do," she teases, turning back to the food, "I don't need Reo setting off the fire alarm again, the landlord was *not* happy last time. Also," she adds, giving the curry another stir, "Inko said she's going to be a bit late because of work, but the boys are still waiting on Shinsou to show up anyways so I don't think it'll be too big of a deal—."

It's a peaceful existence here, warm, comforting. Sansa places his chin on the detective's shoulder with a hum as Misaki continues talking, more laughter drifting through the apartment. The calm is something easy to fall into. Eventually Sansa moves to set the table, leaving him to answer the door when Shinsou arrives, offering to lead him to Reo's room despite the fact he's long since memorized the way.

Naomasa doesn't bother to knock with the boy just behind him, pushing the door open instead. "Shinsou's here," he announces with a smile. He expects it to be met in kind. He doesn't expect to see Midoriya to freeze in place, one foot hiked on top of Reo's desk, bent at an odd angle. There's a screwdriver stuck halfway into the heel of his boot where Reo is trying to pry out what looks like a wheel embedded into the bottom.

"It's not what it looks like," Midoriya rushes, eyes wide as Reo startles at the sound of his voice, bumping into Midoriya in the same breath, forcing the boy to hop back a step. There's a sound like the rolling of a skate as Midoriya's one sturdy leg flies out from under him. He makes a startled noise, grabbing at Reo to try and right himself but only managing to drag the other boy down with him as well, chair and all.

There's a clatter and a bang, a shout from Reo, a pained grunt.

"I'm never letting you touch my shoes again," Midoriya groans, firmly buried beneath the chaos.

"It was a good idea in theory," Reo tries, face smushed into Izuku's chest where he's been trapped by the chair on top of him, one leg pinned awkwardly.

"It was not."

"It was."

"It was *not.*"

Naomasa covers his laugh. Shinsou does not. His grin wide and toothy

as he leans around the detective, snapping a quick picture. “I’m posting this on our account,” he informs them, mischief clear as Sansa and Misaki crowd the doorway behind them, peeking inside to see the commotion. There’s an amused look on Misaki’s face and Sansa’s whiskers twitch with barely suppressed laughter as the chair is picked up and set aside.

At the center of every galaxy is a black hole. A grounding force that drags entire solar systems into orbit. He thinks that, perhaps, Piper had been that for him. Or perhaps he’d been a sun, blinding and bright and warm as Naomasa is drawn across the distance. Or maybe he’d been a streaking comet burning up in the outer atmosphere for all below to see. Perhaps he’d been none of those. Perhaps Piper had just been a boy, waiting for an outstretched hand.

And there’s a memory that comes to Naomasa then, watching as the two untangle themselves, of a scared vigilante crouched in a convenience store who couldn’t accept his offered hand. Naomasa holds a hand out to Midoriya now. And there’s an embarrassed flush on the boy’s freckled cheeks, but he accepts the help, letting Naomasa pull him back to his feet. He offers him a quiet: “Thanks, Detective.”

This was good, like a cooling salve on the still healing wound that was Piper. He smiles, soft and easy because all of his most important people are here and they’re alive and safe and some days he still forgets that Piper’s alive, but other days it’s so easy to remember.

Chapter End Notes

> After four years no one is ever expected to remain the same. At the start of this all I can say with confidence that I was a completely different person. There was a lot I hadn’t learned yet, but I did learn, slowly but surely through friends that led by example. To be loved is to be changed, I’ve seen that phrase floating around the internet in the last few months and I don’t think I quite grasped the idea of it until now. Love and loss and grief, Piper and I have shared a similar journey in that aspect I think.
>
> Piper was a miracle, in the truest sense of the word. Without it, I would not have met many of the close friends I have now, and I believe there’s many people in our discord group that would share the same sentiment. To be loved is to be changed, but I’m certain that to love can change you just as much— Piper would be nothing without you, the reader, the kudo-er, the commenter,

the artist. To be loved is to be changed, truly that's what you all have done.

You are the reason I'm here today, writing this, finishing this. Thank you.
Piper is over. But there's still much to be done. I'll make Piper into a proper book with time and care, and again, it will all be thanks to you. I'm not sure I would've made it this far without the love and support you've offered over these last few years. So readers, new and old, thank you for seeing Piper to its end. It has left a mark in this world far greater than myself, even if it feels silly to say. It has changed my life, it has changed the lives of my friends, and the impact, whether big or small, fleeting or long lasting, has touched you too, dearest reader. If even if for only a moment, I hope you felt something in these words. I hope they helped.

To Avery, to bde, to my wonderful mod team, to my dearest friends, to those we've loved and lost along the way

Until next time;

End Notes

Tumblrs: that-vigilante-piedpiper blackholeca

Twitter: blackholeca

The Piper discord server is currently not an open link. If you'd like to join, please dm Kori or Nat on twitter, or the official Piper account on tumblr. We'd love to have you!

Please do not repost this work; this unfortunately includes translations [while I don't feel I need to offer an explanation for this it is because I would prefer to have direct access to all publicly posted copies of Piper though I do appreciate all the translation offers I've received over the years 💕]

Works inspired by this one

Potential by ultimatequeenoffandoms, Pied Piper: Media Hero by ReebaJee, What is He? by TFeather, Pied Piper: Social Media by KatThorneR, Midoriya, Midoriya, Midoriya, Midoriya... How Many Midoriyas Are There????? by Jdot_FightMe, Diverging Paths Art and Extras by 80sGayTrashGoblin, New Vigilante in Town? by Satancannotstopme803, Pied Piper AU: Occultation by Blackholeca, A Pied Piper's Dream (Dreams useless children have) by CypherPtQueer, I Heard Piper Has a Rat Quirk by FerretDieChaosMeisterin, Pied Piper (Podfic) by Sobreezy, Pied Piper Shorts by Blackholeca, Oboro Shirakumo's Extraordinary Guide to Remaining Completely Oblivious by Blackholeca, When the world collapses beneath your feet by Big_Bisexual_Nerd, dead end by chaotic_doodle, A Vigilant Trio by Fine_Seasoning, I cant. by orphan_account

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!